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REVELATION IN THE QUR'AN:

FROM DIVINE SENDING DOWN (*TANZĪL*)

TO DIVINE COMMUNICATION (*WAḤY*)

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The University of Edinburgh
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signed: ……

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Abstract

Two words have been understood to refer to revelation in the Qur'an, namely *tanzīl* (sending down) and *waḥy* (communication) as well as their cognate verbal forms. However, what exactly constitutes 'revelation' in the Qur'an can only be understood from a systematic investigation of the text itself. Earlier scholarship, while elucidating important semantic differences between the two terms, has supposed an underlying synonymity between them, as both are understood as indicative of a single process: the transmitting or revealing of the revelatory message. In contrast to this, this thesis will show that the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* represent different processes in the Qur'anic concept of revelation and that these are used for different rhetorical means in the text.

The concept of divine sending down (*tanzīl*) refers to a spatial event in the celestial realm when the celestial source book of the revelation and thereby the revelation itself was 'sent down' by God. This event made the revelation available, although not necessarily accessible, to prophets and mankind. On the other hand, the concept of divine communication (*waḥy*) signifies a particular mode of communication that is only decipherable by God's elect. It is through this mode that the revelatory message is communicated to the Qur'anic Messenger. The concepts also have different rhetorical functions in the text—divine sending down affirms the divine origin of the revelatory message itself whereas divine communication attests that the Messenger is a genuine prophet. Moreover, each concept is concentrated in certain chronological periods. When the status of the Messenger as a prophet is under attack in the Meccan period, the concept of divine communication is predominant, whereas when the revelatory message itself is contested in the late Meccan and Medinan period, it is the concept of divine sending down that is prevalent. This chronological distribution is best explained by the dynamic nature of the Qur'an's self-referentiality which is responding to the charged environment in which it was proclaimed.

The two concepts, therefore, cannot be understood to represent a single process in the Qur'an. Rather, they each have a specific role in the Qur'anic concept of revelation. This finding is not only of import conceptually regarding how the Qur'an conceives of its own genesis, but it also sheds light on the rhetorical features of the text.

Lay Summary

Two words have been understood to refer to revelation in the Qur'an, namely *tanzīl* (sending down) and *waḥy* (communication) as well as other words derived from them. However, what exactly constitutes 'revelation' in the Qur'an can only be understood from a systematic investigation of the text itself. Earlier scholarship, while elucidating important differences in meaning between the two terms, has supposed an underlying synonymity between them, as both are understood as indicative of a single process: the transmitting or revealing of the revelatory message. In contrast to this, this thesis will show that these words represent different processes in the Qur'anic concept of revelation and that these are used for different rhetorical means in the text.

The concept of divine sending down (*tanzīl*) refers to a spatial event in the celestial realm when the archetypal source of the revelation and thereby the revelation itself was 'sent down' by God. This event made the revelation available, although not necessarily accessible, to prophets and mankind. On the other hand, the concept of divine communication (*waḥy*) signifies a particular mode of communication that is only decipherable by God's elect. It is through this mode that the revelatory message is communicated to the Qur'anic Messenger. The concepts also have different rhetorical functions in the text—divine sending down affirms the divine origin of the revelatory message itself whereas divine communication attests that the Messenger is a genuine prophet. Moreover, each concept is concentrated at certain times during the course of the proclamations. When the status of the Messenger as a prophet is under attack in the earlier parts of the text, the concept of divine communication is predominant, whereas when the revelatory message itself is contested in the latter parts, it is the concept of divine sending down that is prevalent. This chronological distribution is best explained by the dynamic nature of how the Qur'an refers to itself which is responding to the charged environment in which it was proclaimed.

The two concepts, therefore, cannot be understood to represent a single process in the Qur'an. Rather, they each have a specific role in the Qur'anic concept of revelation. This finding is not only of import conceptually regarding how the Qur'an conceives of its own genesis, but it also sheds light on the rhetorical features of the text.

I don't think a writer ever participates in anything; his pretences at it are mimetic. All he can do is keep the machine functioning and learn to manage it with decreasing (we hope) clumsiness.

Paul Bowles

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It is with sadness that in early 2018 my family lost Susan Marsh. Her intellect was always an inspiration, even if it was contradictory. It would have been pleasing to have been able to present this work to her.

Note on Transliteration, Conventions and Abbreviations

Arabic transliterations follow a modified system based on the standard of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. When quoted in isolation, individual words and noun phrases are usually transliterated without full inflection. When longer phrases and entire Qur'anic passages are quoted they are rendered with full inflection. In such passages the *hamzat al-waṣl* is omitted when preceded by an inseparable preposition. However, in all other cases it is indicated with an open speech mark, e.g., *fī 'l-kitābi*. Nouns which are commonly found in the English language are not transliterated and the simplified anglicised spelling is adopted, e.g., Mecca, Muhammad, sura and Qur'an. All Qur'anic translations are based upon Arthur Arberry's and were freely adapted. Quotations were sourced from the Qur'anic Arabic Corpus website (http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp).

All references follow the Chicago Manual of Style 17th edition with the exception of the encyclopaedias listed below which are referenced in the following format: *Abbreviation of Encyclopaedia*, s.v. 'Title of Article' (Name of Author), e.g., *EI²*, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch).

Abbreviations

EALL Versteegh, C. H. M., and Mushira Eid, eds. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

EI² Bearman, P, *et al*., ed. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. 12 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009.

EQ McAuliffe, Jane Dammen, ed. *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006.

REVELATION IN THE QUR'AN

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is commonly referred to as 'revelation' in both scholarly circles and in popular parlance. This view of the Qur'an is not without foundation as it is both the founding text of Islam and at the very heart of the religion. Moreover, it is, quite appropriately, drawing attention to the transcendental and divine nature of the text. The word clearly carries with it echoes of its Jewish-Christian origins and yet the appropriateness of its application to the Qur'anic text is rarely questioned. This, in itself, is not necessarily a problem: it is possible to use 'revelation' as a mere technical term. However, what exactly constitutes 'revelation' and the specific processes involved therein within the Qur'an can only be validated through a systematic investigation of the text itself. The Qur'an contains numerous references which refer to its own genesis, so the researcher is in a fortunate position to answer this question. In fact, one scholar has recently characterised the Qur'an as 'the most meta-textual and self-referential holy text known in the history of world religions'.[1]

There are two terms in the Qur'an which have been understood to refer to 'revelation': one is *tanzīl* 'sending down' and the other is *waḥy* 'communication' as well as their cognate verbal forms. This backwards reading—that is, starting with a definition from outside the text itself and applying it to terms within the text—has led to an underlying supposed synonymity between the two terms, as both are usually understood to indicate the process of 'revealing', in certain ways, the revelatory message. What, then, might be the result if this reading is set aside and a thorough philological investigation of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* conducted, based upon their usage in the Qur'anic text itself? It is, of course, possible that the two roots in their

[1] Stefan Wild, '"We have sent down to thee the book with the truth...". Spatial and temporal implications of the Qurʾānic concepts of nuzūl, tanzīl, and ʾinzāl', in *The Qurʾān as text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 140. The self-referential aspect of the text been the subject of important recent scholarship on the Qur'an, see Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image: writing and authority in Islam's scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Stefan Wild, ed., *Self-referentiality in the Qur'ān* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006); Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau, *Le Coran par lui-même: vocabulaire et argumentation du discours coranique autoréférentiel* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

Qur'anic contexts might be very closely related, even resulting in a possible case of synonymity, but it is equally possible that a dichotomy might emerge between them. If the latter is the case, this would have important consequences for the understanding of 'revelation' in the Qur'an and at the same time would shed light on the rhetorical features of the Qur'an's self-referentiality.

Although there has been no exhaustive study of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* in the Qur'an, given their importance to understanding the Qur'an's presentation of its divine origin, it is unsurprising that both roots have received considerable attention in earlier scholarship. It has already been intimated that both roots have been understood to represent a single process in the Qur'an, but it remains to be seen why scholars have drawn this conclusion. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss how the two roots have been understood in earlier scholarship and whether any consistent understanding emerges.

The roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* in previous scholarship

The fact that the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* have been considered to a certain extent synonymous, or at least covering a similar semantic range and thus indicative of a single process in the Qur'an, is evident from the beginning of Western critical scholarship. The earliest scholarship only dealt with the roots in passing but important observations were made nonetheless.

Theodore Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally (1909) observed that the serious reflection in the Qur'an about its divine origin is evident in the frequency of 'certain expressions for "to reveal"', which they related to both *waḥy* 'revelation' and its verbal form *awḥā* 'to reveal', as well as to the root *n-z-l* when it is referring to the 'sending down of revelation'.[2] Both roots are reduced to a single role in the Qur'an—the 'revealing' of revelation. This is not to say that the roots were considered exactly synonymous, as Nöldeke/Schwally alluded to the importance of pre-Islamic poetry

[2] Theodor Nöldeke et al., *The history of the Qurʾān*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 99 and fn. 5 (i/120 and fn. 3). This translation is based upon the second edition of *Geschichte des Qorāns* originally published by Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung (Leiden, 1909-38) and which was, of course, significantly revised by Friedrich Schwally and also contains contributions by Gotthelf Bergsträßer and Otto Pretzl. In addition to the page numbers in the English translation, page number references are also given to the three-volume German original. These are detailed in brackets with lower case Roman numerals indicating the volume followed by the relevant page number.

for understanding the semantics of the root *w-ḥ-y*, where it was maintained that it was often applied to 'mysterious and puzzling' forms of communication.[3] It was also posited that the noun *waḥy* refers to writing in the Qur'an—an observation based upon Ignác Goldziher's analysis of the pre-Islamic poets' usage of the word *waḥy* to refer to writing and inscriptions.[4]

The idea that the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* are indicative of a single process is evident in the work of Joseph Horovitz (1926) who characterised the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* as well as the verb *awḥā* as indicating the transmission (*Übermittlung*) of revelation.[5] Despite this, he maintained that the spatial implications of 'sending down' are indicative of the revelation's heavenly origin and that the noun *waḥy* refers to 'inspiration', rejecting Nöldeke's notion that it is indicative of writing in the Qur'an.[6] Horovitz also looked to pre-Islamic poetry to understand the root *w-ḥ-y* and it was this that led him to speculate that it may have been employed because it conveyed a sense of mysteriousness to the Bedouins.[7]

The first scholar to devote considerable attention to the various Qur'anic contexts of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* was Arthur Jeffery (1950), who understood the roots as synonymous in certain verses. For Jeffery the spatial element in 'sending down' poses no problems as the premise that God resides in heaven and mankind on earth was already well known in the ancient Near East and therefore any message from God would necessarily need to be 'sent down'.[8] Unlike scholars before him, Jeffery did not consider the pre-Islamic settings of the root *w-ḥ-y* and he paid little attention to the noun *waḥy* in the Qur'an, which he translated as 'revelation' without explanation.[9] In contrast to this, he did devote considerable attention to the verb *awḥā* where he argued that it is used in two senses: an earlier 'primitive' type, which indicates a general 'inspiration' to say or do something—such as when God prompts Moses to throw his staff (Q 7:117), or the bees to take their home in the mountains (Q 16:68)—to a more technical meaning 'revelation', which is the revealing of

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[3] Nöldeke et al., 17 fn.4 (i/20 fn. 4).
[4] 209 (ii/1). See Ignác Goldziher, *Muslim studies*, trans. Samuel M. Stern and C.R. Barber, vol. 2 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 20 fn. 2. Originally published as *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. 2 (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1890).
[5] Josef Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1926), 67.
[6] Horovitz, 67–68.
[7] Horovitz, 68.
[8] Arthur Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān as Scripture, III', *The Muslim World* 40, no. 3 (1950): 189.
[9] Jeffery, 190.

'Scripture' to prophets, (e.g., Q 16:63).[10] That Jeffery considered the root *n-z-l* as a metaphor for revealing is explicitly made when he states that it is in this second sense that the verb *awḥā* is 'practically identical with *nazzala* (*anzala*).'[11]

In stark contrast to Jeffery, Richard Bell (1953) interpreted the noun *waḥy* and the verb *awḥā* to refer to 'suggestion' regardless of whether the individual verse is within a context which seems to be offering something more 'scriptural'.[12] Bell goes on to explain that the fundamental sense of the word *waḥy* is the communication of an idea by quick suggestion, an interpretation he bolsters by referring to a similar reading found in classical Arabic dictionaries.[13] This is problematic given that such dictionaries are not, of course, independent from Islamic tradition. His interpretation is also no doubt heavily influenced by his works on the composition of the Qur'an which stress the atomistic nature of its composition: for Bell, as *waḥy* is indicative of a quick suggestion, this means that the passages composed must be, out of necessity, comparatively short.[14] Unfortunately, Bell offered no reflection on the role of the root *n-z-l* and as Watt pointed out, it is unclear how he considers the relationship between the two in his theory of revelation.[15]

Toshihiko Izutsu (1964) understood revelation in the Qur'an as a 'linguistic communication' between God and man and he identified both *waḥy* 'revelation' and *tanzīl* 'sending down' and their cognate verbal forms as reflecting an exceptional communication process between God and man.[16] Izutsu gave the root *n-z-l* very little attention although he maintained that the spatial element of sending down indicates that it can only be applied to 'supernatural communication' because only that can be said to be 'sent down', presumably because it is God that resides in heaven.[17] Regarding the root *w-ḥ-y*, he turned to pre-Islamic poetry to understand its Qur'anic

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[10] Jeffery, 190–92.
[11] Jeffery, 192.
[12] Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1953), 32–36.
[13] Bell, 33.
[14] Bell, 34. On his theory of composition, see 33–35, 72–74. For its application in practice see the verse divisions in his translation of the Qur'an, *The Qur'an*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1937); and also his commentary, *A commentary on the Qur'ān*, 2 vols (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991).
[15] Richard Bell and W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 24.
[16] Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*. (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 151–52; the chapter was originally published as 'Revelation as a Linguistic Concept in Islam', *Journal of the Japanese Society of Medieval Philosophy* 5 (1962): 122–67.
[17] Izutsu, *God and Man*, 153.

meaning and observed that the verb *awḥā* indicates a type of mysterious esoteric communication in pre-Islamic poetry, which he linked with the pre-Islamic nominal *waḥy* 'writing', on account of its apparently mysterious character to the Bedouins.[18] Izutsu goes on to argue that the verb *awḥā* has two meanings in the Qur'an: there is a 'pre-technical' usage which is not necessarily verbal and a type of prompting to action, and a 'technical' which is the verbal revelation of scripture.[19] The division is reminiscent of Jeffery's, but instead of it being based upon a notion of scripturality *per se*, it is based upon Izutsu's theory that 'revelation' must be verbal. Despite Izutsu's valuable in-depth analysis of the root *w-ḥ-y* in pre-Islamic poetry and thus its particular semantics, it is clear that he still considers the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* as indicative of a single communication process.

Montgomery Watt (1988) analysed the root *w-ḥ-y* in the Qur'an, and while seemingly unaware of Isutzu's and Jeffery's work, concluded that it is used in both a technical and pre-technical sense depending on whether he considered the verses as referring to non-verbal or verbal revelation.[20] Much like the scholars before him, Watt considered the root *w-ḥ-y* (when used in the 'technical' sense) as practically synonymous with the root *n-z-l* as he argued that the latter is indicative of the same process of verbal revelation.[21]

Thus far it is evident that the root *w-ḥ-y* has gained the lion's share of the scholarly interest. This trend was, to a certain extent, corrected by Stefan Wild (1996) in an article devoted to the spatial and temporal implications of 'sending down'. Despite the fact that the article is devoted to these aspects, Wild follows Izutsu and states that the root *n-z-l* represents divine communication between God and man.[22] Wild, none the less, then reiterates that the notion of 'sending down' is indicative of a two-tier universe where God resides in heaven and mankind on earth.[23] He then attempts to link the spatial aspect with a temporal one where he argues that the revelation was 'sent down' over time.[24] While the former is clearly evident in the Qur'an the evidence he presents for the latter proposition is drawn

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[18] Izutsu, 158–61.
[19] Izutsu, 165–84, esp. 180.
[20] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca: history in the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), 57–60.
[21] Watt, 60.
[22] Wild, 'We have sent down', 138.
[23] Wild, 141–45.
[24] Wild, 146–48.

from the exegetical literature and the *sīra* as opposed to the Qur'anic text itself. His conclusion, therefore, is hardly surprising given that this is the *consensus doctorum* of Muslim tradition.

Following Wild, Daniel Madigan (2010) highlighted the two-tier theological premise evident in the spatial element of 'sending down' and explicitly characterised it as a 'spatial metaphor for revelation' wherein 'the direction of communication is always downward'.[25] He rejected any notion that the noun *waḥy* referred to writing in the Qur'an and argued that it need not necessarily be understood in such a technical sense in pre-Islamic poetry.[26] Madigan also drew attention to Izutsu's interpretation of the root *w-ḥ-y* in pre-Islamic poetry regarding its esoteric meaning and highlights that it is not devoted solely to religious activity in the Qur'an—for example, the devils (*al-shayāṭīn*) are agents of the verb *awḥā* (e.g., Q 6:121).[27] In contrast to Jeffery and Izutsu, he argues that a single meaning can be applied to the verb *awḥā*, which he prefers to translate as 'communication', understanding that it is usually referring to divine communication.[28] Both roots, again, are seen as indicative of a communication process.

Two further studies have offered some additional valuable observations. Angelika Neuwirth (2010) in her monumental work *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang* noted the spatial element of the root *n-z-l* but interpreted it as a metaphor that relates to the transmission of the revelatory message.[29] Neuwirth only briefly considered the verb *awḥā*, which she understood to mean 'inspired, indicated by signs, suggested' and indicative of the 'situation of inspiration', although she did note that its content is not necessarily always 'revelation' but can also take the form of pragmatic suggestions.[30] Although the term *waḥy* occurs far fewer times that the verb *awḥā*, Neuwirth has extensively discussed the term. Like earlier scholars Neuwirth looked to pre-Islamic poetry to understand the term *waḥy* and argued that in poetry it refers to an unintelligible 'writing', although she went further than earlier scholarship and posited that the poets' use of it to mirror the ruins of encampments was to produce a feeling of 'aporia and loss'

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[25] Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 139–40.
[26] Madigan, 16–17.
[27] Madigan, 141.
[28] Madigan, 144. See also *EQ*, s.v. 'Revelation and Inspiration' (Madigan).
[29] Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010), 123–25. See also *EQ*, s.v. 'Verse (s)' (Neuwirth).
[30] Neuwirth, 711.

in the listener.[31] This meaning, however, Neuwirth maintains was inverted in the Qur'an where it is 'a *waḥy* of fulfillment', that is, it indicates the ultimate communication, a 'revelation'.[32] Whether the term *waḥy* is quite so inverted as Neuwirth suggests is open to doubt, as will be shown in the course of this work, but it is clear that a careful reading of the root *w-ḥ-y* in pre-Islamic poetry is undoubtedly a necessity to understanding its Qur'anic meaning.

In a recent book-length study of the Qur'an's self-referential discourse, Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau (2014) devoted considerable attention to the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* and understands both roots as involved with the process of 'revealing' the revelatory message.[33] Despite this commonality with earlier scholarship, Boisliveau distinguishes between the two roots in terms of their function: she maintains that the root *n-z-l* underscores that the revelation originates from God, while the notion of descent underlines God's 'high status' with respect to men and His absolute authority.[34] Regarding the root *w-ḥ-y*, she argues that when this is employed this highlights the notion of speech or text as the revelation is 'verbally inspired' to the Messenger.[35] The latter postulation, that is, that the root *w-ḥ-y* indicates verbal speech, is predicated on Izutsu's theory of verbal revelation as opposed to any new data offered from a close of the Qur'anic contexts of the root *w-ḥ-y*.[36]

From the preceding discussion it is possible to conclude that there are three primary themes which emerge from the studies of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* and their relationship to revelation in the Qur'an. The first is that while the spatial element of the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* as well as the verbal noun *tanzīl* is acknowledged to a certain extent, this meaning is subordinated to a metaphorical interpretation whereby by being 'sent down' the revelation is 'revealed', 'transmitted' or 'communicated'. It is also noteworthy that this leap in meaning from a literal 'descent' to a

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[31] Neuwirth, 711–16; see also, Angelika Neuwirth, 'The "Discovery of Writing" in the Qur'an: Tracing a Cultural Shift in Arab Late Antiquity', in *The Qur'an and adab: the shaping of literary traditions in classical Islam*, ed. Nuha Shaar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 73–76, 81–82.
[32] Neuwirth, 'Discovery of Writing', 81.
[33] Boisliveau, *Le Coran par lui-même*, 107, 129–30.
[34] Boisliveau, 113.
[35] Boisliveau, 121.
[36] It might also be remarked at this point that there is an underlying methodological problem evident in the work as a whole: much of the interpretation, including that of the root *w-ḥ-y*, is explained with recourse to later classical Arabic dictionaries as opposed to the Qur'anic text itself. See Abdessamad Belhaj's review of the book, which raises this issue, in *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 27, no. 4 (2016): 502–504.

metaphorical 'revealing' is never explained, only assumed. This is also evident in many Qur'an translations where the verbs such as *nazzala* and *anzala* are translated as 'to reveal', [37] as well as other scholarly works which do not engage directly with the root *n-z-l* but take this reading for granted. [38] The second theme is that the word *waḥy* and its cognate *awḥā* have been interpreted in various ways, often with recourse to its usage in pre-Islamic poetry. While there is a consensus that it represents an exceptional modality of the way that God communicates in the Qur'an, there is much divergence in how this should be understood, whether there is a development of the term in the Qur'an, as well as how much its Qur'anic meaning relates to, or even represents an inversion of, its pre-Islamic meaning. The third theme is that because most scholars demote the spatial element of 'sending down' to a metaphorical status, there is an imposed degree of synonymity between the two terms which results in their being assigned a single role in the modality of revelation: by 'sending down' (*tanzīl*) God reveals the revelatory message, as He also does through 'communication' (*waḥy*). This problem is thrown into stark relief by Andrew Rippin in his entry on *waḥy* in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, when he states that the 'relationship of *waḥy* to *tanzīl* only makes the picture more complex, for the semantic range of the latter word appears to duplicate that of the former to a fair extent'.[39] Thus, the stage is set for a narrowing of the horizon regarding how the Qur'an represents its own genesis. A final observation to be made, and this might be thought of as a corollary to the last point, is that the relationship of *tanzīl* and *waḥy* and their cognate verbal forms to other key Qur'anic terms, such as *al-kitāb* (the Book), is often left without recourse to any explanation in these works.

My intention in the following chapters is to set aside as much as possible the prior judgements about the relationship between the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* and

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[37] See, for example, the well-known translations by M.M. Pickthall and Yusuf Ali. Even when it is translated literally (e.g., 'to send down'), such verses are still construed to mean 'to reveal'. Such is the case in a new translation by Arthur J. Droge as he states in the introduction that 'the Qur'an was 'sent down' or revealed to the Prophet'. See Arthur J. Droge, ed., *The Qurʾān: a new annotated translation* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2014), xxii. Similarly, in M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's recent Qur'an translation he states, again in the introduction, that the Qur'an was 'revealed gradually, piece by piece' (xv). This is then implied in his rendering of, for example, Q 17:106 'We have sent it down, little by little' (*wa-nazzalnāhu tanzīlan*).

[38] For example, when discussing Q 29:46, Geo Widengren respects the spatial aspect of the root *n-z-l* and translates *anzalnā 'l-kitāba* as 'We sent down the Book' but then talks about the book being 'communicated to Muḥammad'. See *Muḥammad: the apostle of God, and his ascension* (Uppsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1955), 117.

[39] *EI*^{2}, s.v. '*Waḥy*' (Rippin).

'revelation' and attempt to judge them on their own terms through a rigorous philological investigation of the Qur'anic text as well as other relevant sources. Chapter 1 focusses on the root *n-z-l* and offers a holistic investigation into its Qur'anic usage, which is equally concerned with verses which refer to the sending down of rain (e.g., Q 22:46) as with the sending down of revelation (e.g., Q 97:1), and attempts to show that that the spatial aspect of 'sending down' is key to understanding one of the ways that the Qur'an presents its own genesis, although this is not tantamount to its disclosure. In chapter 2 I turn to the root *w-ḥ-y* and revisit in considerable detail its usage in pre-Islamic poetry and argue that there are important semantic elements therein which are carried into the Qur'an, where I take it to represent, in the main, God's 'divine communication' to prophets. Thus, the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* represent two separate processes in the Qur'anic conception of revelation. Chapter 3 takes a step back and offers a high-level perspective by demonstrating that the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* are concentrated in particular chronological periods and literary contexts. These initial observations are taken up in chapter 4 which analyses diachronically the literary contexts in which the roots occur and identifies how the concepts of 'divine sending down' and 'divine communication' function rhetorically in the Qur'an. This leads to further conclusions regarding the chronological distribution of the two roots and the dynamic nature of the Qur'an's self-referentiality. The final chapter synthesizes these findings and defines 'revelation' from a Qur'anic perspective before finally offering some potential avenues for further research.

Overall approach of the study

Before beginning the subject proper, it remains to detail the overall approach adopted in this study and any presumptions which may affect the reading of the text. The first and most important presumption is that I take the Qur'an to be a product of 7th century Arabia, which contains the record of the addresses of the Qur'anic Messenger to his audience, and is therefore the earliest example of Islamic literature.[40] While this was self-evident to earlier scholars of Islam, this premise was

[40] In this thesis the individual who is addressed repeatedly in the second person singular in the text is labelled as 'the Messenger' or the 'the Qur'anic Messenger' when additional clarification is required. This is obviously derived from the Arabic title *al-rasūl*. As is well known, there is also—among others—the title of *al-nabī* 'the prophet' applied to the

brought into serious doubt in the wake of the publication of John Wansbrough's seminal studies *Quranic Studies* (1977) and *The Sectarian Milieu* (1978).[41] For Wansbrough, the profound reworking of Biblical materials in the Qur'an was less an indication of the syncretistic environment of late antique Arabia, but rather evidence that the Qur'an was little more than prophetic sayings derived from various sources, which were compiled by an anonymous group of redactors outside of Arabia—possibly located anywhere in the Near East. The process of canonisation, Wansbrough maintained, was so gradual that it would not be possible to speak of a fixed version of the Qur'anic text until after 800 CE.

Despite the unquestionable contribution that Wansbrough's studies have made to Qur'anic studies, including making it abundantly clear that the Islamic sources must be approached critically, his central thesis is largely rejected. The valuable 'revisionist scholarship' that followed—as typified by the works of Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, Gerald Hawting and Andrew Rippin—gave rise to a renewed critical evaluation of the traditional narratives of Islamic origins.[42] While this is not

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addressee of the text. However, I refrain from switching between the titulature and employ the expression 'the Messenger' consistently in this thesis. The presumption of identity between the Messenger and the Prophet I consider self-evident. I also consider the person named four times as Muhammad in the text (Q 3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29) to be identical with the Messenger and the Prophet. See further in this chapter for a discussion on the broad acceptance of the outline contained within the *sīra* literature. On the notion of the privileged addressee, see Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: a contemporary approach to a veiled text* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 240–43. For a contrary position regarding the addressee of the text, cf. Andrew Rippin, 'Muhammad in the Qurʾān: Reading Scripture in the 21st Century', in *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources*, ed. Harald Motzki (Boston: Brill, 2000), 298–309.

[41] See John Wansbrough, *Quranic studies: sources and methods of scriptural interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. 43-52; *The sectarian milieu: content and composition of Islamic salvation history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). See also the useful second edition of *Quranic Studies* edited by Andrew Rippin (Prometheus, 2004).

[42] The revisionist scholars have contributed many important works, for example Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Michael Cook, *Early Muslim dogma: a source-critical study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Patricia Crone, *Meccan trade and the rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Gerald Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Andrew Rippin, *The Qur'an and its interpretative tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2001). Despite the unquestionable significance of these works there remains a profound epistemic pessimism underscoring much of this scholarship whereby the history of Islam is deemed to be so warped that investigating how the Qur'an has emerged and what it might have signified to its original audience is dismissed as naïve. An example of this is the well-known statement from Andrew Rippin where he argued that scholars should focus on the history of interpretation of the Qur'an, i.e., *tafsīr*, and that this is the 'most appropriate, [and] intellectually convincing and rewarding task', see Andrew Rippin, ed., 'Introduction', in *Approaches to the history of the interpretation of the Qur'ān*

the place to critique Wansbrough's theory in detail,[43] it is worth noting that recent scholarship by, amongst others, Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, has convincingly shown that the broad outline of Islamic origins as presented in the *sīra* literature—which need only include the basic data of the lifetime of the Prophet, the location of his activity, the *hijra* and the community's cohabitation with Jewish groups and its engagement in military activities in Medina and Mecca—can be accepted as historical.[44] This is not to advocate a return to the days of un-critical reliance upon the traditional narrative of Islamic origins or to read the Qur'an in light of the *sīra*. Rather, it is to acknowledge that to fully understand and interpret the Qur'anic text, one must be able to place it within a certain place and time—and to do this, one need only accept the most sparing of details contained in the *sīra*.

As for the dating of text itself, both material evidence and recent scholarship have shown that an early codification of the received standard *rasm*, that is, the consonantal structure of the text, is increasingly likely. Several recent studies have rejected the traditional Islamic dating of the unification of the various Qur'anic traditions into a single codex (*muṣḥaf*) at the time of the third caliph, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (r. 23/644-34/655), and instead argued that the Qur'an only existed as a codex

(Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 4. However, as Daniel Madigan has convincingly argued, the very hermeneutic position that Rippin is advocating—that no original meaning can be found in the Qur'an or its historical context gleamed, would equally apply to the *tafsīr* texts themselves. See 'Reflections on some current directions in Qur'anic studies', *The Muslim World* 85, no. 3–4 (July 1995): 351. Further critique of this position can be found in David Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the unbelievers: a Qurʾanic study* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 8–14.

[43] The most profound critique of Wansbrough's position is found in Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins: the beginnings of Islamic historical writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 25–63.

[44] See Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads. Das Korpus ʿUrwa ibn az-Zubair* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), 279–80, 294; Andreas Görke, 'Prospects and Limits in the Study of the Historical Muhammad', in *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam: Essays in Honour of Harald Motzki*, ed. Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, C. H. M. Versteegh, and Joas Wagemakers (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 137–51, esp. 148–49; Andreas Görke, 'Muḥammad', in *Islam: Einheit und Vielfalt einer Weltreligion*, ed. Rainer Brunner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 86–109, esp. 102–4; Patricia Crone, 'What do we actually know about Mohammed?', Open Democracy, 2014, http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/mohammed_3866.jsp. For a more skeptical assessment cf. Stephen J. Shoemaker, 'In Search of 'Urwa's Sīra: Some Methodological Issues in the Quest for "Authenticity" in the Life of Muḥammad', *Der Islam* 85, no. 2 (2011): 257–344; as well as the response in Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler, 'First-Century Sources for the Life of Muhammad? A Debate', *Der Islam* 89, no. 2 (2012): 2–59.

from the time of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r.65/685-86/705).[45] However, the various types of literary and material evidence that support this hypothesis have also been shown to be in concordance with the traditional dating, while there are no features of the Qur'anic text that suggest that it remained fluid into the eighth century—for example, there are no references to the major developments in Islamic history during the period from 630-700.[46] In addition to this, Islamic tradition unanimously credits ʿUthmān with producing the codex,[47] and many of the specific traditions which detail these events have been shown to be dateable to the 1st century of Islam.[48]

Perhaps the most significant evidence for supporting a mid-seventh century dating of the Qur'anic text are the manuscripts that have been radiocarbon dated to this time or earlier. Some of the Qur'an folios found in the Great Mosque at Ṣanʿāʾ in 1972, which represent large portions of the text, are consistently being radiocarbon dated to before 660 CE.[49] Other manuscripts, such as a fragment recently discovered at Birmingham University which has been dated between 568 and 645 CE, are also

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[45] See Patricia Crone, 'Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Early History of the Qur'ān', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, no. 18 (1994): 1–37; Chase F. Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005); David S. Powers, *Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men: the making of the last prophet* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). This modern debate is indebted to Paul Casanova and Alphonse Mingana who questioned the reliability of the ʿUthmānic dating and posited that the codification of the Qur'an took place during the rule of ʿAbd al-Malik. See Alphonse Mingana, 'Transmission of the Kur'ān According to Christian Writers', *Muslim World* 7, no. 4 (1917): 402–414; Paul Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde: étude critique sur l'Islam primitif* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1911), 141–42.

[46] See Nicolai Sinai, 'When did the consonantal skeleton of the Quran reach closure? Part I', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies. University of London* 77, no. 2 (2014): 273–92 and Part II: 77, no. 3 (2014): 509-21; Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins*, 49.

[47] See Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins*, 26–28.

[48] See Harald Motzki, 'The Collection of the Qur'ān. A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments', *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34; Gregor Schoeler, 'The Codification of the Qurʾan: A comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 779–94.

[49] On the Ṣanʿaʾ manuscripts see Asma Hilali, *The Sanaa Palimpsest: The Transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann, 'The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet', *Arabica* 57, no. 4 (2010): 343–436; Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, 'Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins of the Qurʾān', *Der Islam* 87, no. 1–2 (2010): 1–129; Gerd R. Puin, 'Observations on Early Qurʾan Manuscripts in Ṣanʿāʾ', in *The Qur'an as Text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 107–12.

being dated to before the mid 7th century.[50] Although carbon dating has occasionally produced anomalous results, as well dating only the parchment itself and not necessarily when it was used,[51] it appears that the Qur'anic text—albeit with some variants—was extant from the 650s, and it was codified no later than ʿUthmān's reign.[52]

It should be noted that despite the early codification of the standard *rasm*——that is, the *rasm* of the received text as we have it today—in the time of ʿUthmān, this does not preclude the possibility that some individual verses may have been modified, changed or even omitted from the Qur'an over the course of the twenty years (or possibly sixty years if the ʿAbd al-Malik dating is accepted) following the death of the Qur'anic Messenger. This, one might say, is a period of history which may never be fully brought to light. Moreover, because of the orthography of the early Arabic script a fixed *rasm* does not necessarily entail a text with no variants.[53] The opposite is of course the case, as such variants ultimately formed the seven authoritative 'readings' (*qirāʾāt*) of the Qur'an.[54] Many of these variants are, however, concerned with phonetics as opposed to meaning and so do not represent textual variants in a strict sense.[55]

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[50] For a selection of four manuscripts dated using the carbon-14 method, see Michael Marx and Tobias J. Jocham, 'Zu den Datierungen von Koranhandschriften durch die 14C-Methode', *Frankfurter Zeitschrift Für Islamisch-Theologische Studien* 2 (2015): 9–43. On the Birmingham manuscript, see Maev Kennedy, '"Oldest" Qur'an Fragments Found at Birmingham University', *The Guardian*, 22 July 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/22/oldest-quran-fragments-found-at-birmingham-university.

[51] See François Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads: a first overview* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 12–13.

[52] For a catalogue of variants between the ʿUthmānic *rasm* and the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest C1, see Sadeghi and Bergmann, 'The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet', 417–33.

[53] This is clearly demonstrated by Sinai in *The Qur'an: a historical-critical introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 30–32. On the early development of the Arabic script, see, for example, *EQ*, s.v. 'Arabic script' (Gruendler); *EALL*, s.v. 'Arabic Alphabet: Origin' (Gruendler); Robert G. Hoyland, 'Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background to the Qurʾān', in *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel S. Reynolds, (London: Routledge, 2008), 51–69; Andreas Kaplony, 'What Are Those Few Dots For? Thoughts on the Orthography of the Qurra Papyri (709-710), the Khurasan Parchments (755-777) and the Inscription of the Jerusalem Dome of the Rock (692)', *Arabica: Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 55, no. 1 (2008): 91–112; *EALL*, s.v. 'Old Arabic (Epigraphic)' (Macdonald).

[54] The seven readings were codified in Ibn Mujāhid's (d. 936) *Kitāb al-sabʿa fī al-qirāʾāt*.

[55] On the variants see Yasin Dutton, 'Orality, Literacy and the "Seven Aḥruf" Ḥadīth', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 1–49.

Thus, it is fair to say that the Qur'anic text, as we have it today, was likely codified by the mid-seventh century, notwithstanding some textual variation between this and the non-ʿUthmānic recensions as well as the seven canonical readings. For this thesis, it is the most widely printed and recited Qur'anic reading of the standard *rasm* today, that of Ḥafṣ *ʿan* ʿĀṣim, which is employed as the base text.

The second presumption is that the Qur'anic text can plausibly be arranged into a chronological order and that Theodore Nöldeke's schematic is the most convincing and valid in broad outlines.[56] A detailed comparison of the traditional Muslim accounts and the attempts by Western scholars such as those of Weil, Nöldeke, Blachère and Bell is hardly possible here.[57] It is sufficient to state that I accept the approach adopted by Nöldeke to dating the suras, which showed that the Qur'anic text consists of textual clusters—united by such diverse internal criteria as verse length, overall text length, rhyme profiles, introductory formulae, literary structure, terminology and vocabulary usage—and that these are best explained as indicative of chronological stages of development.[58] Several recent studies with a range of different textual criteria have converged with Nöldeke's chronology; such as that increased verse length coincides with independent lexical markers.[59] While Nöldeke posited a chronological order of suras within each of the four periods that he identified—early, middle and late Meccan and Medinan—in the diachronic part of this study, only the chronological periods themselves are utilised. There is no

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[56] See Nöldeke et al., *The history*.

[57] For an overview of the traditional chronologies, see Nöldeke et al., 48-54 (i/58-65); *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch). On the modern western chronologies, see *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch); Bell and Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 108–9 and 205-15 for a comparative table; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 76–96. An engaging discussion of Nöldeke's chronology can be found in, Nicolai Sinai, 'Qurʾan as Process', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Michael Marx, Angelika Neuwirth, and Nicolai Sinai (Leiden: Boston, 2010), 407–44, where Sinai contends that the 'early Meccan' period can be further subdivided into four textual groups.

[58] This summary of Nöldeke's methodology is based upon a succinct statement found in Nicolai Sinai, 'An Interpretation of Sūrat al-Najm (Q. 53)', *Journal of Qurʾānic Studies* 13, no. 2 (2011): 6.

[59] See Behnam Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qurān: A Stylometric Research Program', *Arabica* 58, no. 3 (2011): 210–299; Nora K. Schmid, 'Quantitative Text Analysis and Its Application to the Qurʾān: Some Preliminary Considerations', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Michael Marx, Angelika Neuwirth, and Nicolai Sinai (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 441–60; Sinai, 'Qurʾan as Process'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 111–24.

reference to the chronological order of the suras within each period as Nöldeke's chronology cannot be relied upon when it comes to the detailed order of the suras.

Nöldeke has been critisised for basing his chronology on entire suras when other scholars such as Richard Bell, Montgomery Watt and Alford T. Welch have argued that the original unit of revelation was much smaller.[60] While the position that the sura was the original compositional unit remains controversial, a plethora of recent scholarship has shown the underlying literary unity in many suras, particularly those of the Meccan period and, increasingly, the Medinan period too.[61] This does not rule out that additions may have been made to texts at a later date—this is clearly the case in a number of instances as Nöldeke himself identified—but it does mean that if a scholar claims that a text is not a genetic unity, this needs to be supported by significant textual evidence.[62] For the purposes of this thesis the view I have

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[60] See Bell, *Introduction*, 103; Bell and Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 111; *EI*^{2} , s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch).

[61] The literary unit and structure of the Meccan suras was the subject of a significant monograph by Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), (second edition 2007). This approach to the unity of suras underlines much of her work, see, for example, the recent collected volume of articles, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). See also, Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 97–161. For a demonstration of the method of 'paragraphing' a sura as an interpretative tool to demonstrate its underlying structure, see Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 81–92. For recent literary studies of Medinan suras, see A. H. Mathias Zahniser, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders in Two Long Sūras: Al-Baqara and Al-Nisā'', in *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'ān*, ed. Issa J. Boullata, Curzon Studies in the Qurʾān (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 26–55; Neal Robinson, 'Hands Outstretched: Towards a Re-reading of Sūrat al-Māʾida', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2001): 1–19; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 203–23; Nevin Reda El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'an: Repetition and Narrative Structure in Surat Al-Baqara' (Ph.D, University of Toronto, 2010); Marianna Klar, 'Re-examining Textual Boundaries: Towards a Form-Critical Surāt al-Kahf', in *Islamic studies today: essays in honor of Andrew Rippin*, ed. Majid Daneshgar and Walid A. Saleh (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2017), 215–38; Marianna Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure: Combining Synchronicity with Diachronicity in Sūrat al-Baqara. Part One', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2017): 1–38; Marianna Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure: Combining Synchronicity with Diachronicity in Sūrat al-Baqara. Part Two', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2017): 64–105; see also Mustansir Mir, 'The Sūra as Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qurʾān Exegesis', in *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993), 211–224; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qurʾān* (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1986).

[62] On the process of literary growth, see Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 92–104; Nicolai Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs', in *Islam and its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69–119.

adopted is one of 'default holism',[63] that is, that the sura is considered a genetic entity unless proven otherwise. This issue, however, does not have a large effect on the study because the number of verses which include the roots *n-z-l* or *w-ḥ-y* and which have been considered additions by Nöldeke is very limited.[64] To a large extent the question of the unity of the sura can therefore be bracketed for this study.

It has already been indicated that the broad outline of the *sīra* is accepted, albeit with considerable caution. This statement, however, does not entail that the Qur'an is read with recourse to either the *sīra* or traditional Islamic exegesis in this study. Quite the contrary: the reading is based solely on the Qur'anic text itself and what can be gleaned from a careful and 'slow' reading of the text.[65] There are minimal references to the broad outline of the *sīra* narrative, but this is not a study which treats the Qur'an and its exegesis as a single subject. Rather, the object of this study is to read the Qur'an in a robust literary and historical-critical manner and to allow the Qur'an to speak for itself, in its own terms.[66] Here, I am reminded of a masterly hermeneutical statement offered by Sidney Griffith:

> Hermeneutically speaking, one should approach the Qur'ān as an integral discourse in its own right; it proclaims, judges, praises, blames from its own narrative center. It addresses an audience which is already familiar with oral versions in Arabic of earlier scriptures and folklores. The Qur'ān does not borrow from, or often even quote from these earlier texts. Rather, it alludes to and evokes their stories, even sometimes their wording for its own rhetorical purposes. The Arabic Qur'ān, from a literary perspective, is something new.[67]

The above quotation brings us on to another methodological principle of this study. In order to do justice to the complex of ideas, or the 'integral discourse' as Griffith puts it above, relating to revelation in the Qur'an, the principal object of

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[63] The phrase is Nicolai Sinai's, see 'Sūrat al-Najm', 6.
[64] See Chapter 4.
[65] It was, after all, the Russian philologist Roman Jakobson who defined philology, rather charmingly, as the 'art of reading slowly'. Apparently, this idea was already Nietzsche's, who described himself as "ein Lehrer des langsamen Lesens". See Sheldon Pollock, 'Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World', *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 4 (2009): 931–61 esp. 933.
[66] For a useful overview of the historical-critical method see Nicolai Sinai, 'Historical-Critical Readings of the Abrahamic Scriptures', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions*, ed. Adam J. Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 209–225.
[67] Sidney Griffith, 'Christian lore and the Arabic Qurʾan: The "Companions of the Cave" in Surat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian tradition', in *The Qurʾān in its historical context*, ed. Gabriel S. Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), 128.

study will be the Qur'anic text itself and not its intersection with other relevant, mostly Biblical, texts. In other words, the study is largely, although not exclusively, intratextual as opposed to intertextual. This is, of course, not to dissuade such an approach to the Qur'an, as it has yielded significant results.[68] But it is to say that in order for the student of the Qur'an to identify and understand complex issues the starting point must be the text itself. As Daniel Madigan has rightly pointed out, it is the task of the interpreter to read *from* the Qur'an and not *into* the Qur'an what he might have learned from other scriptures.[69] Moreover, such a focus on the text itself, as would be customary in Biblical studies, might also be seen as a counterbalance to the prevalence of 'source' studies, that is, studies which focus on texts outside the Qur'an, as opposed to a literary analysis of the Qur'an itself.[70]

An exception to the above statement is the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry which is clearly, in both time and space, the closest to the Qur'anic text. While some of the material which is purported to represent pre-Islamic poetry is undoubtedly later forgeries, it is equally true that much of the material is authentic.[71] This material represents an important and immediate background to the Qur'anic text. My use of this corpus in this work is primarily philological to understand the original settings and, therefore, meanings of Arabic words, as is particularly evident in the treatment of the root *w-ḥ-y*.[72] As will hopefully be shown, such a study which preferences

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[68] The studies are too numerous to mention, but beginning, of course, with the work of Abraham Geiger, see Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?: Eine von der Königl. Preussischen Rheinuniversität gekrönte Preisschrift* (Bonn: F. Baaden, 1833); translated as *Judaism and Islām: a prize essay*, trans. F. M. Young (Madras: MDCSPCK Press, 1898). The most significant recent monograph placing the Qur'an in its late antique context is by Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 2010.

[69] Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 23.

[70] On the issue of preferencing outside texts over the Qur'an itself as a characteristic of Qur'anic studies, see Angelika Neuwirth, 'Neither of the East nor of the West (*lā sharqiyya wa lā gharbiyya*): Locating the Qur'an within the History of Scholarship', in *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 16–19; Angelika Neuwirth and Nicolai Sinai, 'Introduction', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Michael Marx, Angelika Neuwirth, and Nicolai Sinai (Brill: Leiden, 2010), 12–14.

[71] On the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry in general see the extensive discussion in Ewald Wagner, *Grundzüge der Klassischen Arabischen Dichtung*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987), 12–29.

[72] The importance of pre-Islamic poetry for understanding the Qur'an is made forcefully by Thomas Bauer, 'The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry for Qurʾanic Studies Including Observations on Kull and on Q 22:27, 26:225, and 52:31.', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 699–723. For instructive examples, see Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, 'Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry', in

intratextual analysis albeit without totally sidestepping intertextuality, and which truly engages with the text in a detailed and methodologically sound way, can yield significant new insights into key aspects of the Qur'anic discourse.

Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam, vol. 1 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 136–61; Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, 'Al-Khansā''s Poem in -Ālahā and Its Qur'ānic Echoes. The Long and the Short of It', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3, 29, no. 1 (2019); Ghassan El-Masri, 'Maʾsal: What the Ṭalal Would Tell Us', in *Qurʾānic Studies Today*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Michael A. Sell (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 249–61. Earlier work tended to focus on the poet Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt. See Aloys Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1861), 76–81 and 110–19; Tilman Seidensticker, 'The Authenticity of the Poems Ascribed to Umayya b. Abī l-Ṣalt', in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J. R. Smart (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), 87–101; Gert Borg, 'The divine in the works of Umayya b. Abî al-Ṣalt', in *Representations of the divine in Arabic poetry*, ed. Ed de Moor and Gert Borg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 9–23; Nicolai Sinai, 'Religious poetry from the Quranic milieu: Umayya b. Abi l-Salt on the fate of the Thamud', *Bulletin of The School of Oriental And African Studies* 74, no. 3 (2011): 397–416.

CHAPTER 1

DIVINE SENDING DOWN (*TANZĪL*)

The root *n-z-l*, with its basic lexical meaning of 'to descend' occurs 293 times in the Qur'an.[1] It is not only the revelatory message that God 'sent down' but also frequently rain (lit. *māʾ min al-samāʾ*) as well other natural or supernatural phenomena. The spatial implications of the root are clear because God resides in heaven and mankind on earth and therefore God must necessarily 'send down'. However, when it is stated that God 'sent down' the revelatory message the scholarly consensus, as shown before, is that a form of communication or transmission has taken place: the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* are understood in a metaphorical sense to refer to a 'revealing' or 'disclosure'. Similarly, the verbal noun *tanzīl* is taken as a scriptural convention for 'revelation'. In contrast to this understanding, this chapter will show that in such verses the root *n-z-l* does not represent a communication process at all. Rather, the spatial element inherent to the root *n-z-l* should be understood no less literally here than when God 'sent down', for example, rain or his divine aid (*sakīna*).

The chapter is divided in two parts. The first half deals with preliminary issues and shows that God is the primary agent of sending down in the Qur'an and that it is necessary that God sends down to act in history. The second half is concerned with when God 'sent down' the revelatory message. In this section I elucidate the concept of a celestial book, which is usually referred to as *al-kitāb* but also occasionally by the indefinite *kitāb*, from which the Qur'anic revelations derive, and argue this was sent down in what I call the 'celestial event'. Furthermore, it is maintained that at the time the celestial source book was sent down its content was not communicated, although its descent is a necessary step towards the content being

[1] The following concordance was utilised in this study: Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li-l-alfāẓ al-qur'ān al-karīm* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1981).

made accessible to prophets and mankind. The final part of the chapter elucidates the details and significance of the celestial event.

1.1 Overview of the root *n-z-l*

As already stated, the meaning of the root *n-z-l* is quite straightforward, 'to descend, to come down'. It is cognate with several other Semitic languages where it generally indicates a spatial movement of descent.[2] The root is well attested in pre-Islamic poetry. It is frequently used to describe dismounting from a horse or camel. For example, in a poem by Imruʾ al-Qays he describes, in the first person, that after watching some eagles he dismounts (*nazaltu*) in the presence of a group of travelers.[3] More often, however, a nominal form is used to signify a place of alighting or descending (e.g., *manzil*).[4] Rarely, it is used to describe the descent of the poets' material, such as in a poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit, which states that he received weighty verses after their descent (*nuzūl*) from the sky.[5]

Turning to the Qur'an, the most prevalent verbal forms of the root are the causative forms II and IV. Form II *nazzala* occurs 62 times in its verbal form, 15 times as the verbal noun *tanzīl* and once each as the active participle (*munazzil*) and passive participle (*munazzal*). Form IV *anzala* is the most prevalent with 183 instances of the verbal form, five as the active participle (plural only: *munzilūn*) and

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[2] See Martin R. Zammit, *A comparative lexical study of Qurʾānic Arabic* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 399.

[3] Albert Arazi and Salmān Muṣāliḥah, eds., *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn fī dawāwīn al-shuʿarāʾ al-sitta al-jāhiliyyīn: ṭabʿa jadīda wa-muʿjam mufahras* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1999), 72.

[4] For many examples of this type see the concordance in Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*.

[5] The lines are as follows, *wa-qāfiyatin ajjat bi-laylin razīnatin* / *talaqqaytu min jawwi ʿl-samāʾi nuzūlahā* (Weighty verses resound through the night; which I received coming down from the air of the sky'). See *The Dīwān of Ḥassān b. Thābit*, ed. Hartwig Hirschfeld (London: Brill, 1910), 14. This verse has led several scholars to argue that *nuzūl* is indicative of the poet's inspiration, see Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān as Scripture, III', 190; Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 1977, 59; Izutsu, *God and Man*, 170–71; Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2013), 123. The verse itself, however, bears no indication that this this case; it is more likely that inspiration took place in the act of receiving (*laqqā*) not in the act of descent (*nuzūl*). This type of verse also seems to be very rare: it is only this line of Thābit's that is referenced in the works cited above to support the equating of poetic inspiration with *nuzūl*. Clearly this question needs revisiting. It is also doubtful whether this poem is pre-Islamic as the verse which immediately follows it seems to reflect the *iʿjāz* concept found in the Qur'an (as already identified by Wild, see 'We have sent down', 140, fn. 10.).The lines are: *yarāhā ʿlladhī lā yanṭiqu ʿl-shiʿra ʾindahu / wa-yaʿjizu ʿan amthālihā an yaqūlahā* (The one who does not speak poetry sees it; and is unable to speak similarly).

two as the passive participle (*munzal*). Much rarer is form I *nazala* which occurs six times and form V *tanazzala* which occurs seven times.[6] Various nouns derived from the root occur on 11 occasions: *nuzul* (lodging), *manāzil* (lunar stations) and *nazla* (descent).[7] The corresponding causative verbal forms II *nazzala* and IV *anzala* mean 'to send down', although there has been some attempts to distinguish between these two forms in their Qur'anic application. In a careful study, F. Leemhuis began by showing that the inherent characteristics of form II – that is, implying intensity and therefore plurality of action, is not born out in the Qur'anic data regarding the root *n-z-l*, nor can a distinction be made between form II and IV based on plurality of subject or object.[8] Leemhuis did, however, propose a division between form II as factitive and form IV as causative and following this argued that the object of form II is 'inactive/non-co-operative' and form IV is 'active'.[9] Despite his valiant attempt he is unable to adequately account for the seemingly undifferentiated application of the root *n-z-l* in form II and IV; the criteria for each division are sufficiently blurred as to be problematic, as he readily admits when he states that 'the borderline between factitive and causative must be seen as rather vague and overlappings may certainly occur'.[10] The problem with such a binary distinction between form II and IV is clearly illustrated in Q 4:136 where both form II and IV share the object *al-kitāb*, 'the Book (*al-kitāb)* which He has sent down (*nazzala*) on His Messenger and the Book which He sent down (*anzala*) before…'. This is hardly an anomaly: *al-kitāb* is the direct object of form II on four occasions and form IV on 15.[11] Likewise, rain (lit. *māʾ min al-samāʾ* or *al-ghayth*) is the direct object of form II on seven occasions and form IV on 18 occasions. It should also be borne in mind that in the imperfect, forms II and IV are indistinguishable in their *rasm*. There is at least some possibility

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[6] Form I: Q 17:105; 26:193; 34:2; 37:177; 57:4; 57:16. Form V: 19:64; 26:210; 26:221, 222; 41:30; 65:12; 97:4.
[7] *Nuzul* eight times (Q 3:198; 18:102; 18:107; 32:19; 37:62; 41:32; 56:56; 57:93), *manāzil* twice (Q 10:5 and 36:39) and *nazla* once (Q 53:13).
[8] F. Leemhuis, *The D and H stems in Koranic Arabic: a comparative study of the function and meaning of the fa''ala and 'af'ala forms in Koranic usage*, Publications of the Netherlands Institute of Arachaeology and Arabic Studies in Cairo 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 20–25.
[9] Leemhuis, 20–21.
[10] Leemhuis, 36. See also John Wansbrough's useful review of the book in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41, no. 2 (1978): 371-372.
[11] For example, see Q 7:196 (form II) and Q 29:47 (form IV).

that if there was distinction, this may have already been lost in transmission of the text itself.[12]

There also appears to be little distinction in meaning between the prepositions used with form II and IV. The two most common prepositions are *ilā* and *ʿalā*. While the former usually means 'to' and the latter 'upon', they are used seemingly indiscriminately with the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala*. For example, both prepositions are used for the frequent affirmation that 'the Book' (*al-kitāb*) has been sent down to/upon the Messenger. [13] There is also no distinction to be found between their use and the relative verbal forms as both prepositions are employed with form II and IV.[14] Both prepositions, of course, imply motion one from place to another. Less common is the preposition *li-*, which occurs on only four occasions and is likely identical in meaning to *ilā* in this context.[15] A reading of 'for' is also possible given that in all verses what is sent down is referring to God providing for mankind: 'sustenance' (*rizq*, Q 10:59 and 40:13), 'rain' (*māʾ min al-samāʾ*, Q 27:60) and certainly when 'cattle' (*al-anʿām*, Q 39:6) are 'sent down'.[16] However, in Q 8:11 the preposition *ʿalā* is used when God 'sent down' rain upon mankind. There are other verses where one would expect the preposition *li-* if there was a strict application of the sense of 'for', but *ʿalā* is employed. Take for instance, where clothing is sent down 'upon' the children of Adam in Q 7:26 'Children of Adam! We have sent down a garment upon you (*anzalnā ʿalaykum libāsan*) to cover your shameful parts'. The final preposition, again very rare, is *maʿa* (with) which occurs on four occasions.[17] This must, to some extent, be considered separate from the preceding prepositions denoting as it does, an 'association and connection in time and place'.[18]

Form V may be read in the same sense as the basic form *nazala*, 'to come down', although it is, of course, properly the reflective of form II. This form originally had an intensive meaning and it would, as such, not be unacceptable to

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[12] Although this is not the case when the direct object is *al-kitāb* because all verbs are in the perfect form and so distinguishable in their *rasm*. E.g., *anzala* and *nazzala*.
[13] For *ʿalā* see 3:3, 7; 4:113, 136; 16:89; 18:1; 29:51; 39:41 and *ilā* see Q 4:105; 5:48; 16:64; 29:47, 39:2.
[14] *ʿAlā* is used with form II on 30 occasions, form IV on 35 occasions. *Ilā* is used with form II once (Q 6:111) and with form IV on 52 occasions.
[15] With form IV verb: Q 10:59; 27:60; 39:6 and form II: Q 40:13.
[16] On the various meanings of the *li-* particle, see William Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), II: 147-153. The volume number is followed by the page number as they are separately paginated in this edition.
[17] See Q 2:213; 7:157; 57:25.
[18] Wright, *Grammar*, 164 (II).

interpret form V as carrying, in some sense, the original intensiveness of form II.[19] However, as already discussed, such inherent characteristics of form II do not appear to be found in the Qur'anic application of *nazzala*. Despite this, it should be noted that the subject of the verb *tanazzala* is usually plural (e.g., angels, *al-malāʾika* or devils, *al-shayāṭīn*) and therefore it might remain possible to understand the verb as indicating 'to come down in many places, at many times'.[20] This reading would, of course, also require a consideration of the verses themselves. Given that that there is an example of form V with a single subject (Q 65:12) and the lack of inherent characteristics of form II exhibited in the Qur'an itself, in all likelihood, there is little difference in meaning between form I and form V.

1.2 Spatial implications of the root *n-z-l* and the author of the act

Of the 194 active verbal forms (including participles), God is the agent in 175 instances, or almost 90%. There are 73 instances of passive verbs and God is likely the implied agent in all cases. But one example should suffice, Q 5:67, 'O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord (*mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*).' While it is possible that the Messenger is being instructed to deliver what has been sent down by someone other than God, it is highly likely that this periphrastic phrase is indicating that the implied agent is God. Moreover, the phenomenon of the passive indicating that God is the author of the act is prevalent throughout the Qur'an.[21] The idea that God sends down to mankind is built upon the premise of a two-tiered universe: the heavens and the earth.[22] God is described as 'He who is in heaven' (*man fī al-samāʾ*, Q 67:16-17) and the title Lord of heavens (*rabb al-samāwāt*) is a frequent name applied to God in the Qur'an.[23] He sends down

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[19] Wright gives the example, *tafarraqa al-nās* vs. *iftaraqa al-nās*, the latter expressing 'the mere separation', the former 'the separation into a great many groups or in various directions'. See I: 36-7.

[20] For plural subject, see Q 19:64, 26:210, 26:221, 26:222, 41:30, 97:4.

[21] Wright mentions this as explicitly one of the usages of the passive in Arabic, see *Grammar*, 50 (I). See also, *EALL*, s.v. 'Passive' (Bubenik) where it is detailed that the agentive phrase is not usually added to the passive construction in Arabic because of a) the pragmatic restriction on the expressibility of the agent and b) the 'specific cultural phenomenon of not naming God in numerous expressions involving the divine agency'. The second explanation, one would presume, is borne from the same phenomenon in the Qur'an.

[22] Hell, it would seem, is on the same level as heaven. There is a barrier between them (*ḥijāb*, Q 7:46) and yet the inhabitants of both heaven and hell converse with one another (see, Q 7:40-51). See, *EQ*, s.v. 'Hell and Hellfire' (Rosalind).

[23] On 13 occasions, e.g., Q 13:16 and 17:102.

rain from heaven (*māʾ min al-samāwāt*) on many occasions.[24] The notion of a two-tiered universe is clearly evoked with the fixed phrase *al-samāwāt wa-l-arḍ* (the heavens and the earth) which occurs more than 100 times in the Qur'an. As Stefan Wild has pointed out, this mirrors the same concept of heaven and earth found in both Genesis and the New Testament and Mesopotamian cosmology.[25] In the Qur'an, those who reside in heaven such as the angels (*al-malāʾika*, e.g., Q 41:30) and the spirit (*al-rūḥ*, e.g., Q 97:4) are said to descend (*tanazzala*), as do the devils (*al-shayāṭīn*, e.g., Q 26:221-2). God is generally never the subject of a 'coming down' in the Qur'an; the closest is Q 53:13 where it is likely stated that the Messenger saw God on 'another descent' (*nazla ukhrā*).[26] The motion is, generally, one of God sending things down, not one of God descending. This contrasts with the Old Testament where God is frequently said to have 'come down'—for example in Numbers 11:17, to instruct Moses and in Genesis 11:5 to see the construction of the Tower of Babel.[27] God can, of course, raise things up such as the heavens (*al-samāwāt*, Q 13:2) and Jesus (Q 3:55), while He also knows what ascends and descends from heaven (Q 57:4).

The notion that God resides in the heavens and mankind on earth is further reflected in stories where prophets surmount higher places to receive or meet God—to be closer to God. Moses ascended to Mount Sinai to receive the tablets (Exodus 19). In the early *sīra* literature, the Qur'anic Messenger is said to have received his first revelation on a mountain, *Jabal al-Nūr*, and is also purported to have ascended to heaven in his *miʿrāj*, although any clear reference is lacking in the Qur'an.[28] Such tropes of prophetic ascension are extremely prevalent in Near Eastern prophetic

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[24] E.g., Q 22:63. See the next section of this chapter for a discussion of the objects related to *nazzala* and *anzala*.

[25] Wild, 'We have sent down', 143–44; for further intertextual examples see Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān as Scripture, III', 189–90.

[26] Islamic tradition generally holds that the object of the vision was the angel Gabriel. The likelihood that it was actually God is discussed in chapter 2, sub-section 2.2.3.

[27] The word used, though, is not *n-z-l*, but *y-r-d*. See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 432–33.

[28] See ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (al-Qāhira: Maktabāt al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1974). References to the night journey are traditionally understood to be Q 17:1, 60 and 53:13-18. Of course, this has an elaborate history in the *ḥadīth* and *sīra* tradition. See Josef van Ess, 'Vision and ascension: Sūrat al-Najm and its relationship with Muḥammad's miʿrāj', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999): 47–62.

literature.[29] Recently, Kevin van Bladel has argued that the term *asbāb*, which occurs five times in the Qur'an, represents heavenly chords by which prophets ascend to heaven, a concept which is also found in West Asian cosmologies.[30] The notion of God residing in heaven and mankind on earth is clear in the Qur'an and is a primary trope of Near Eastern prophetic literature. When God 'sends down' the gap is breached, as it were, between God in heaven and mankind on earth.

While God is by far the most prevalent agent of the causative verbal forms of *nazzala* and *anzala*, angels are also agents of the verb, although their act is subordinate to God. In Q 16:101-2 it is stated that 'the Holy Spirit sent it down (*nazzalahu rūḥu 'l-qudusi*) from thy Lord in truth…' and in Q 2:97 it is Gabriel who 'sent it down upon thy heart (*nazzalahu ʿalā qalbika*)' this time by the leave of God. The exact referent for the 'free floating' accusative suffix *-hu*— that is, a suffix which has no obvious reference point in the text itself—need not necessarily concern us here, although it is likely that it refers in some sense to the Qur'anic revelations themselves.[31] This is evident when The Trustworthy Spirit (*al-ruḥ al-amīn*) is said to have 'brought it down' to the Messenger's heart (*nazala bihi*, Q 26:193-4), wherein the accusative suffix refers to the 'sending down (*tanzīl*) of the Lord of all Being (*al-ʿālamīn*)' (Q 26:192). What is important to recognise in these verses is that while the aforementioned are grammatical agents, their act is subordinate to God: in Q 2:97, it is specifically by God's leave; and in Q 16:102 and 26:193 the source of what was sent down is God. Related to God as the ultimate agent of sending down is Q 26:210 where it is specifically denied that the devils brought 'it', i.e., the revelatory message, down (*wa-mā tanazzalat bihi 'l-shayāṭīnu*)'.

In Q 29:33-4 it is stated that the (angelic) messengers (*al-rusul*) will cause a punishment (*rijz*) to descend on Lot's people:

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[29] See Geo Widengren, *The ascension of the apostle and the heavenly book* (Uppsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1950).

[30] See, K. van Bladel, 'Heavenly cords and prophetic authority in the Quran and its late antique context', *Bulletin Of The School Of Oriental And African Studies* 70 (2007): 223–246.

[31] On these accusative suffixes and their referents, see Angelika Neuwirth, 'From Recitation through Liturgy to Canon: Sura composition and Dissolution during the development of Islamic Ritual', in *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 150; *EQ*, s.v. 'Form and structure' (Neuwirth); Nicolai Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality as a strategy of self-authorization', in *Self-referentiality in the Qurʾān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 110. See also chapter 5 for a consideration of these suffixes and further secondary references.

> 33 And when Our messengers came to Lot he was troubled on their account and distressed for them; but they said, "Fear not, neither sorrow, for surely we shall deliver thee and thy family, except thy wife; she has become of those that tarry.
> 34 We shall send down upon the people of this city a punishment out of heaven (*innā munzilūna ʿālā ahli hādhihi 'l-qaryati rijzan mina 'l-samāʾi*) for their ungodliness."

The angelic messengers are named here as *rusul* and in other tellings of the story as *mursalūn* (e.g., Q 15:61). As the story is a rendering of Genesis 19 which mentions two angels it is safe to assume that here *rusul* refers to messenger angels and not prophets. This also makes perfect sense given the other verses where the angels are the agents of the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* just discussed. Moreover, if this were to refer to prophets it would be the only instance of a prophet as the agent of sending down the Qur'an. In other verses it is God who sends down the divine punishment (*rizn*) and this verse might ultimately be understood as the angels doing God's bidding.[32]

In the remaining cases where other agents of the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* are present, these are in the 2nd person, usually addressed to the Messenger in the form of a request or question by his various opponents. In Q 4:153 and Q 17:93, the Messenger is requested by his opponents to send down a book (*tunazzilu kitāban*) presumably as proof of his prophethood. On both occasions, the request is rejected outright. In Q 4:153, the episode is narrated by the divine speaker in the 3rd person and the request is as follows, 'The People of the Book will ask thee to send down upon them a Book from heaven (*an tunazzila ʿalayhim kitāban mina 'l-samāʾi*)'. The verse continues by stating that such a request is evidently out of the question as it is compared to when the People of the Book had previously asked Moses to show them God openly and they were then punished by being struck by a thunderbolt. Similarly, in a series of verses (Q 17:90-96) unnamed opponents ask the Messenger for a number of additional proofs of his prophecy, including for him to send down a book upon them (*tunazzila ʿalaynā kitāban*, Q 17:93). The response is similarly dismissive as the Messenger is instructed, 'Say: "Glory be to my Lord. Am I naught but a mortal, a messenger?" The idea that the Messenger could send down a book is firmly

[32] For example, Q 2:59. For God as the originator of the punishment, see Q 7:134-35; 162; 8:11.

rejected. That it is impossible that anyone could send down the like of what God sends down is made abundantly clear in Q 6:93 which refers to false prophets who claim that they 'will send down the like of what God has sent down (*sa-unzilu mithla mā anzala 'llāhu*)'. This is then decried as one of the greatest evils against God in latter part of the verse. Finally, in Q 56:69 a rhetorical question is clearly intended to invoke the response that it is God who sends down rain, 'Did you send it down (*a-antum anzaltumūhu*) from the clouds or are we the senders (*al-munzilūna*)?'.

The picture is thus undeniable in the Qur'an. It is God who resides in heaven and it is God who sends down, it is not for mankind or even a prophet to do so. Occasionally, angelic messengers, who also reside in heaven, send down, although it is made clear that they are only doing God's bidding.

But what is it that God 'sent down' and what are the consequences of such an event? The objects can be grouped into two categories. The first are of the non-revelatory type, where, for example, rain is sent down. The second category, and the most prevalent, is where an object is sent down that is related to the revelatory message, for example, *al-kitāb* (the Book). I shall begin by discussing the first category because these verses are usually understood to refer to a spatial event, before moving toward those concerned with the revelatory message, which have been considered in a quite different light.

1.3 The divine sending down of non-revelatory objects

God sent down a variety of objects to mankind which do not appear to be related to the revelatory message. The most common of these is rain which is sent down on over 25 occasions.[33] It is through this act that mankind can flourish, Q 2:22 'and He sent down (*anzala*) out of heaven water, wherewith He brought forth fruits for your provision.' Occasionally, the rain may act as a punishment as in Q 24:43, 'And He sends down (*yunazzilu*) out of heaven mountains, wherein is hail, so that He smites whom He will with it, and turns it aside from whom He will.'[34] It is not only water that is sent down from the sky, but also *rizq* (sustenance, Q 40:13).[35] God sent down

[33] Usually *mā' min al-samā'*, see, for example, Q 6:99; 16:65; 30:39; 78:14. Also, *al-ghayth* 'rain' (Q 31:34 and 42:28), *mā' ṭahūr* 'pure water' (Q 25:48), *al-wadaq* 'rain' (Q 30.49).
[34] Hail is literally, '*mina 'l-samā'i min jibālin fīhā min baradin*'.
[35] See also Q 10:59.

a *rijz* (divine punishment, Q 2:59) from the sky to punish the opponents of Moses and in the story of the Last Supper, it is God who sent down a table of food (*min al-māʾida*) to Jesus' disciples (Q 5:114-5). God sent down eight pairs of cattle (*al-anʿām thamāniya azwāj*, Q 39:6) to mankind as well as clothing (*libās*) upon the children of Adam in Q 7:26. He also sent down '*mann* and quails' (*al-mann wa-l-salwā*, Q 2:57, 20:80, 7:160) to the Israelites. In Q 28:24 it is Moses who implores God to provide for him by requesting Him to send down whatever good He can (*anzalta ilayya min khayrin*). The act of God sending down is one way in which He interacts with mankind; what has been sent down has been made available to those He has sent down to. Such is made clear by two further important phenomena that are sent down, *sakīna* and *furqān*, both of which refer to God's engagement with the believers by way of his supporting them in battles.

The word *sakīna* occurs on six occasions in the Qur'an, all within military contexts.[36] In Q 2:248, it is mentioned that a *sakīna* will come to Saul in the Ark (*al-tābūt*), 'And their Prophet said to them, "The sign of his kingship is that the Ark will come to you, in it a *sakīna* from your Lord…"' The context of the verse is whether Saul is able to lead the Israelites into battle and the Ark and the *sakīna* is proof of his divinely sanctioned status to do so. In the remaining verses *sakīna* is 'sent down' to either the Messenger or the believers themselves. In three instances *sakīna* is associated with divinely assisted battles, often aided by invisible armies. In Q 48:4 God has sent down (*anzala*) the *sakīna* into the hearts of the believers after proclaiming that God will aid the believers in a mighty victory (*naṣr ʿazīz*, Q 48:3). Later in the same sura in verse 18 after the believers swore allegiance to the Messenger, God knew 'what was in their hearts, so He sent down *al-sakīna* upon them (*fa-anzala 'l-sakīnata ʿalayhim*) and rewarded them with a nigh victory (*fatḥan qarīban*)'. Similarly, in Q 9:26 God sent down his *sakīna*, as well as 'unseen armies' (*junūd lam tarawhā*), to the Messenger and the believers (*al-muʾminūn*. In Q 9:40 God sent down His *sakīna* to the Messenger when he was in the cave (*al-ghār*) and supported him with 'unseen armies'. Finally, in Q 48:26, God sent down his *sakīna* to his Messenger and the believers to differentiate them from the unbelievers, 'When the unbelievers set in their hearts fierceness, the fierceness of pagandom, then God sent down his *sakīna* upon His Messenger and the believers (*anzala 'llāhu sakīnahu*

[36] See Q 2:248; 9:26; 9:40; 48:4,18, 26.

ʿalā rasūlihi wa-l-muʾminīna), and fastened to them the word of godfearing to which they have better right and are worthy of'. Although this verse does not refer to a battle *per se* it is concerned with the general tension between the believers and unbelievers. From these verses it would appear that *sakīna* refers to a type of 'divine aid', most often leading to a victory in battle.

But what form does this 'divine aid' take? The Arabic root *s-k-n* denotes 'stillness, quietness', as in Q 6:96 'He splits the sky into dawn and has made the night for a repose (*saknan*)'. More often it means 'to inhabit, stay, dwell', for example in Q 6:13 'And to Him belongs whatsoever inhabits (*mā sakana*) the night and the day…'. As has been long recognised, the latter meaning is cognate with the Hebrew/Aramaic/Syriac root *sh-k-n* which is 'to dwell or reside within something or someone', and in Jewish theological terms, referring to God's presence in the world and some type of divine 'in-dwelling'.[37] G. Vajda highlighted the parallel of the aforementioned Q 2:248 with Exodus 40:34-5 wherein the Ark was 'the glory (*kābōd*) of Yahweh' and quite rightly pointed out that the concept of the Qur'anic *sakīna* shared something with the Biblical *kābōd*, that is, it implies 'something of God' without being identical to God.[38] Although God himself seems to rarely, if at all, descend in the Qur'an, it is clear that he 'sent down' something of himself, that is, his *sakīna*. The Arabic semantic overtones of this word, i.e., that of peace and serenity enable us to imagine the form of this divine support. Unfortunately, the Qur'anic contexts do not allow us to judge if the 'divine support' takes a concrete manifestation or is an abstract concept. However, the outcome of this divine support which is 'sent down' is clear: it is a decisive victory and an attestation of the divinely sanctioned prophet and believers. When God sent down the 'divine aid' it was made available to the prophet and believers, although it likely remained inaccessible to their opponents.

God does not only support the believers and the Messenger militarily through *sakīna*: He also sent down 'security' (*amana*) in battle (Q 3:154); 'angels' (*al-malāʾika*) to reinforce the believers (Q 3:124); 'unseen armies' (Q 9:26) to punish the unbelievers; and 'iron' (*al-ḥadīd*, Q 57:25) which provides great power. On two

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[37] *EQ*, s.v. 'Shekhinah' (Firestone). See also Josef Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925): 208–9; Arthur Jeffery, *The foreign vocabulary of the Qurʾān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 174; Zammit, *Qurʾānic Arabic*, 225.
[38] *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Sakīna' (Fahd).

occasions God is said to have 'sent down' *al-furqān*, a term which like *sakīna*, also seems to have significance regarding divinely assisted military victories.[39] Scholars have long associated the word with the Syriac *purqānā* meaning 'salvation, redemption, deliverance' while also recognising that the Arabic root *f-r-q* which means 'to separate, divide, distinguish', plays an important role in its Qur'anic applications.[40] While the word has also been understood to refer to the revelatory message—in part because it appears in close proximity to *al-kitāb* (Q 2:53 and 25:1) and the idea that the revelation is itself the 'criterion'[41]—it is more likely that it refers to a divine victory.

Richard Bell and others understand *furqān* as related to the victory at the Battle of Badr, referenced as 'the day when the two hosts encountered' in Q 8:41: 'if you believe in God and that We sent down upon Our servant on the day of the *furqān* (*mā anzalnā ʿalā ʿabdinā yawma 'l-furqāni*), the day when the two hosts encountered; and God is powerful over everything'.[42] Bell later argued that it was this moment which marked the final separation between the Messenger's followers and the unbelieving Meccans, noting the original meaning of the Arabic root *f-r-q* 'to separate, distinguish' as well as its salvific aspect.[43] Whether this verse refers specifically to the battle of Badr and thus marks a decisive separation from the unbelieving Meccans as Bell suggests is questionable, it is certainly possible to notice the double implication of the word in this verse: the Syriac 'salvation' and the Arabic 'to separate, distinguish' and that it appears to refer to a specific event. The term, most likely, refers to a type of 'divine deliverance' of particular import given to the emerging community. It is, after all, when God 'sent down' the *furqān* that a 'great victory' was given to the believers.

To conclude, God does not send down without consequence. Rather, it is through this act that God intervenes in history. The divine 'sending down' is

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[39] See Q 3:4 and 25:1.
[40] For a convenient review of its etymology see, Jeffery, *Foreign vocabulary*, 225–29.
[41] Daniel Madigan has most recently espoused this position but is also careful to underscore its varied semantic range, see *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 126–27. On the other hand, he is more skeptical on the viability of the term's application to the text here, 'The limits of Self-referentiality', in *Self-referentiality in the Qurʾān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 65–67, esp. 67.
[42] See Richard Bell, *The origin of Islam in its Christian environment: the Gunning lectures, Edinburgh University, 1925* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 118–25; Bell, *Introduction*, 137–38; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 16.
[43] Bell, *Introduction*, 137–38.

necessary because God resides in heaven and mankind on earth, but it is equally important that it is through this act of sending down that God makes things available, although not necessarily accessible, to mankind. For instance, God makes the rain available to mankind by sending it down, as He did clothes to Adam and the table to Jesus' disciples. These might all be interpreted as signs of God's benevolence towards mankind. On the other hand, when He sent down his divine support (*sakīna*) or divine deliverance (*furqān*) which resulted in victories on the battlefield, this was only accessible to the select groups that He has chosen, i.e., the emerging believers.

1.4 The divine sending down of the revelatory message

The second half of this chapter is dedicated to the phenomenon of 'sending down' the revelatory message. Despite the importance of the spatial implications of the root *n-z-l* as just discussed, the 'sending down' of revelation is seldom understood as a spatial event but is understood as merely a metaphor for the communication of the divine message. This understanding stems from the premise that the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* and the verbal noun *tanzīl* represent one of the processes by which the revelation is transmitted or revealed to the Messenger. In contrast, I would like to maintain that no communication is indicated in these verses and that they should be understood as a literal sending down in the same manner as in the verses just discussed. To be sure, it is when God 'sent down' the revelatory message that it was made available—although not necessarily accessible—to both prophets and mankind, but it remains a spatial event none the less. However, before I attempt to elucidate this spatial event in terms of what it means for the concept of revelation in the Qur'an, it is necessary to begin with an exposition of a key Qur'anic concept, namely the celestial archetype of the revelations, which is usually referred to as *al-kitāb* 'the Book'.

1.4.1 The notion of a celestial source book

It has long been recognised that in several verses the Qur'an appears to refer to a celestial archetype which is the source of the revelation.[44] In Q 80:11-16 the

[44] See, for example, Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 67 (i/79); Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 65–67. And more recently Neuwirth, 'Discovery of Writing', 76–81; Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality'. Cf. Welch's rejection of the heavenly archetype in *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'.

revelation, referred to by a free-floating accusative suffix, is defined as a 'reminder' (*tadhkira*) and said to be in 'high-honoured pages':

11 No indeed; it is a Reminder (*innahā tadhkiratun*)
12 and who so wills, shall remember it
13 in high-honoured pages (*fī suḥufin mukarramatin*)
14 uplifted, purified
15 by the hands of scribes (*safara*)
16 noble, pious.

The picture described in these verses is one of lauded pages which are written by scribes and form the source of the revelation. In Q 85:21-22 the archetype of the revelation has been given another form: the revelation is first qualified as a recitation (*qurʾān*) which is then said to be preserved in a heavenly storage medium, a 'preserved tablet' (*lawḥ maḥfūẓ*), 'Nay, but it is a glorious recitation, in a preserved tablet' (*bal huwa qurʾānun majīdun fī lawḥin maḥfūzin*). In contrast to this in Q 56:77-78 a 'recitation' (*qurʾān*) is said to be in a 'hidden book' (*kitāb maknūn*). As Nicolai Sinai has highlighted, all three verses exhibit a similar structure: first the revelation is qualified from either a functional perspective (*tadhkira*) or from a performative one (*qurʾān*) and then it is said to be 'in' (*fī*) something: *suḥuf*, *lawḥ*, *kitāb*.[45] To this it is also possible to add Q 43:1-4 where the revelation is qualified as an 'Arabic recitation' (*qurʾān ʾarabī*) which is then described as being in the 'mother of the Book' (*fī ummi 'l-kitābi*, Q 43:4), here again referring to the celestial archetype.[46] There is, then, a clear distinction between the revelation and its heavenly archetype; albeit this is described in various ways.

It may be observed from the verses just discussed that the Qur'an does not explicitly state that the archetype resides in heaven. However, given the Qur'anic premise that God resides in heaven and mankind on earth, it follows (although it is not logically binding) that the archetype of revelation, which by its very nature must be divine, resides in the heavenly realm. This does appear to be indicated in Q 43:4 when the 'mother of the Book' is described specifically as 'with us' (*ladaynā*); presumably referring to God in heaven. Also, the reference to the noble scribes (Q

[45] Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 115.
[46] See the remarks by Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 65; Widengren, *Muḥammad*, 117; cf. Rudi Paret, *Der Koran : Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 60–61.

80:15-16) who are writing down the revelation is best understood as referring to angels, who of course also reside in heaven.[47]

The Qur'an, does not only speak of one kind of heavenly book which represents its heavenly 'scriptural' archetype; it seems to speak of several with different purposes. Principal among these is a book wherein God keeps an inventory of everything that was created, 'Didst thou not know that God knows all that is in heaven and earth? Surely that is in a Book (*inna dhālika fī kitābin*)....'.[48] In this record book is all that God knows, Q 6:59 'With Him are the keys of the Unseen; none knows them but He. He knows what is in land and sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the earth's shadows, not a thing, fresh or withered, but it is in a book manifest (*fī kitābin mubīnin*)'. Related to this is the inventory of every human's deeds, as in Q 10:61 '…We are witnesses over you when you press on it; and not so much as the weight of an ant in earth or heaven escapes from thy Lord, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but in a book manifest (*fī kitābin mubīnin*).[49] Specifically, in Q 82:10-12 we are informed that noble writers record all that is done, 'Yet there are over you watchers, noble writers (*kirām kātibīn*), who know whatever you do.' This verse recalls the 'noble scribes' (*safara kirām*) of the archetype of revelation in Q 80:15-16. More detail of the records is given in Q 81:10 where pages or scrolls (*al-ṣuḥuf*) will be made public, heaven stripped away, and Hell set ablaze. A similar scenario is presented in Q 84:7-12 which details that man will be judged according to his record book (*kitāb*). In Q 18:49 this scenario is related to the opening of the record book on Judgement Day 'And the Book (*al-kitāb*) shall be set in place; and thou wilt see the sinners fearful at what is in it, and saying, "Alas for us! How is it with this Book (*hādhā al-kitāb*), that it leaves nothing behind, small or great, but it has numbered it?" And they shall find all they wrought present, and thy Lord shall not wrong anyone.'

Such celestial books as those described in the Qur'an are well attested in Near Eastern traditions. Arthur Jeffery highlighted that the books have similarities with the Biblical 'book of decrees' where God's decrees are recorded; the 'inventory book' where everything in the universe is created; the 'record book' where men's deeds are recorded; and finally, a heavenly book which was brought down from

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[47] On angels residing in heaven see, for example, the recurring narrative of Iblīs refusing to bow to Adam and then his banishment from heaven (e.g. Q 7:11-18).
[48] See also, Q 6:38, 59; 10:61; 11:6; 27:75.
[49] See also, Q 3:53, 181; 4:81; 5:83; 9:120-1; 10:21; 21:94; 19:79; 43:19, 80, 78:29.

heaven by the Apostle, wherein the heavenly book itself becomes scripture.[50] Jeffery divided the books into "*kitāb* as a heavenly book" vs. a "*kitāb* as scripture" and envisaged the heavenly books as referring to separate books.[51] Geo Widengren rejected Jeffery's division of the heavenly books and following an observation by Johannes Pedersen put forward the idea that all such books are merely aspects of a single heavenly book and that the Qur'anic image corresponds closely with the multiple functions of the Babylonian Tablets of Destiny.[52] More recently, Daniel Madigan has opted for a textual explanation and rightly points out that such distinctions between different heavenly books are hardly tenable as it is rather hard, if not impossible, to assign a given instance of *kitāb* in the Qur'an to one category or another.[53] For example, there is no clear distinction between the book of one's deeds or the book of one's fate, or the celestial archetype. Moreover, the same phrase *kitāb mubīn* is used to describe multiple categories. In Q 27:75, a heavenly record book is described, 'there is nothing hidden within the heaven and the earth which is not in a clear book (*fī kitābin mubīnin*)', vs. the same expression which is used in introductory verses which state the divine origin of the Qur'anic text, Q 27:1, 'Those are the signs of the recitation and a Manifest Book (*tilka āyātu 'l-qurʾān wa-kitābin mubīnin*)'.[54]

The concept of the heavenly or celestial book is clearly a complex issue in the Qur'an. Angelika Neuwirth has made the case that the varied functions of the heavenly book in the Qur'an are part of a gradual movement away from multiple heavenly books towards a single heavenly book in the ancient Near East.[55] Neuwirth brings to attention an observation by James L. Kugel that the integration of God's heavenly record books *and* an archetype for scripture is manifest in the Book of Jubilees—Kugel states that 'the Interpolator [of the Book of Jubilees] adopted the idea of the heavenly tablets but turned it into a new purpose; they would be the place in heaven where God had *also* inscribed the Torah's laws from the beginning of

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[50] Arthur Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān as Scripture, I', *The Muslim World* 40, no. 1 (1950): 47–55.
[51] Jeffery, 55.
[52] Widengren, *Muḥammad*, 119–21. Widengren references Johannes Pedersen's review of *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen* by Eduard Meyer in Der Islam 5 (1914):110-5
[53] Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 5.
[54] For the former, see also Q 11:6 and 36:12. For the latter, see Q 26:1 and 27:1.
[55] Neuwirth, 'Discovery of Writing', 79.

time'.[56] In other words, the tablets included both the celestial 'book of the divine decrees' as well as the book or record of man's deeds. The heavenly tablets have become the celestial archetype of the revelations, reminiscent here of Q 85:21-22, when the revelations are described as being in a 'preserved tablet' (*lawḥ maḥfūẓ*).

There are, however, various ideas in the Qur'an about what format the celestial archetype might take: *suḥuf* (pages), *lawḥ maḥfūẓ* (preserved tablet) or simply a *kitāb*. It is the latter which is ultimately the most prevalent as evidenced in the numerous appeals to a *kitāb* or *al-kitāb* in the Qur'an, which are best understood as references to a transcendent and remote 'scripture'.[57] The possible reasons for the variants in the image of the celestial archetype are discussed towards the end of the chapter, but it is worth noting here that the concept of the heavenly archetype is now an all-encompassing one. The single, heavenly *kitāb*, is not only the source of the Qur'anic revelations and contains all aspects of prophetic history and the fundamental cosmological order of things, but it also contains all of God's decrees and records of human actions.

1.4.2 The divine sending down of the celestial source book

It has been established that the notion of a celestial source book exists in the Qur'an. It will now be shown that this is 'sent down' by God. The second important observation that will be made in this section is that the celestial source book is sent down not only to prophets but to the audience of the recitations, too. Once these two points are recognised, it becomes impossible to maintain that the verbs *nazzala/anzala* and the verbal noun *tanzīl* are functioning metaphorically to signify an act of communication. This is for two reasons: first, revelation is only communicated by God to prophets in the first instance and not to mankind at large—for if this was so, the need for prophets is surely moot. Second, if the celestial source book is said to have been 'revealed' to the Messenger, this implies that *all* the

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[56] Quoted in Neuwirth, 79. See, James L. Kugel, *A walk through Jubilees studies in the Book of jubilees and the world of its creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 13.

[57] See Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 98-99 (i/120); Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 65–67; see also Neuwirth, 'From Recitation through Liturgy to Canon', 149–50; originally published in a slightly different form as 'Vom Rezitationstext über die Liturgie zum Kanon: Zu Entstehung und Wiederauflösung der Surenkomposition im Verlauf der Entwicklung eines islamischen Kultus', in *The Qurʾan as Text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 69–106; Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 116.

Qur'anic revelations would have been communicated at once, *in toto*, given that the book itself and thus its contents would have been 'revealed' in this event. This is, however, in direct contrast to the Qur'an's situatedness.

The most prevalent object of the verbs *nazzala/anzala* is *al-kitāb* which occurs on 20 occasions. It is mentioned on 13 occasions that 'the book' (*al-kitāb*) is sent down to the Messenger.[58] In these cases the prepositions employed with the verbs are *ilā* (five times) and *ʿalā* (eight times). Comparing the prepositions yields little differentiation, if any, between them. Take for example Q 3:3 'He has sent down upon thee the Book with the truth (*nazzala ʿalayka 'l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi*), confirming what was before it' and Q 39:2 'We have sent down to thee the Book with the truth (*innā anzalnā ilayka 'l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi*). As such, and as already noted, the preposition results in no distinction in meaning in the verses.[59] In all but two of the verses where *al-kitāb* is sent down to the Messenger, *al-kitāb* stands alone in the sentence; it is not followed by a relative clause. This is significant because, as Sinai has recently highlighted, there 'appears to be no passages in the Qurʾān where the expression *al-kitāb* without a qualifying relative clause unequivocally denotes the qurʾānic corpus rather than its transcendent source'.[60] For example, in Q 3:7, 'It is He who sent down upon thee the Book, from it are clear verses, they are the mother of the Book (*huwa 'lladhī anzala ilayka 'l-kitāba minhu āyātun muḥkamātun hunna ummu 'l-kitābi*)'. In this verse, it states that the 'clear verses' which are 'from' *al-kitāb* are the mother of the book, perhaps meaning here the foundation of the book, as opposed to its heavenly archetype (as in Q 13:39 and 43:4). In Q 5:48, *al-kitāb* was sent down to the Messenger in order to confirm what came before it, 'And We have sent down to thee the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book, and assuring it (*wa-anzalnā ilayka 'l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayhi mina 'l-kitābi*)', and in Q 18:1, *al-kitāb* is sent down to the Messenger and is affirmed as not containing any 'crookedness': 'Praise belongs to God who has sent down upon His servant the Book (*alladhi anzala ʿalā ʿabdihi 'l-kitāba*) and has

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[58] Q 3:3, 7; 4:105, 113, 136; 5:48; 16:64, 89; 18:1; 29:47; 29:51; 39:2, 41. Three times with form II and ten times with form IV.

[59] See the earlier discussion on prepositions in section 1.1.

[60] See, Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 129 and fn 102. The only possible exception, Sinai notes, is Q 2:2 which might have been intended as an introduction to whole corpus because of the use of the demonstrative pronoun, *dhālika*.

not assigned unto it any crookedness'. These verses indicate that it is the celestial source book which has been sent down to the Messenger.

There are two verses where *al-kitāb* is sent down to the Messenger and is followed by an asyndetic relative clause. In Q 29:51 *al-kitāb* is said to be recited, 'Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down upon thee the Book that is recited to them (*anzalnā ilayka 'l-kitāba yutlā ʿalayhim*)?'. This could be interpreted to refer to the revelations themselves and their manifestation as a material book because it is *al-kitāb* which is recited. It is more likely, however, that this is best understood as a recitation from a remote celestial archetype. On two occasions the Messenger is requested by his opponents to send down a *kitāb* from heaven (Q 4:153 and 17:93) and in both verses, as previously discussed, it is made clear that such a request has not been granted—God has never 'sent down' a material book to the Messenger on earth. Similarly, in a hypothetical scenario in Q 6:7, God states that even if He had sent down a book on parchment, they would not have believed, 'Had We sent down on thee a Book on parchment (*nazzalnā ilayka kitāban fī qirṭāsin*) and so they touched it with their hands, yet the unbelievers would have said, "This is naught but manifest sorcery."' It is likely that *al-kitāb* refers to the celestial source book in Q 29:51, which is then recited as part of its earthly display.

There remains another verse where *al-kitāb* is qualified by a relative clause and sent down to the Messenger, Q 4:136, 'O believers, believe in God and His Messenger and the Book He has sent down on His Messenger and the Book which He sent down before (*wa-l-kitābi 'lladhī nazzala ʿalā rasūlihi wa-l-kitāb alladhī anzala min qablu*). Whoso disbelieves in God and His angels and His Books (*kutubihi*), and His Messengers (*rusulihi*), and the Last Day, has surely gone astray into far error.' Given the plurality of books in this verse it might seem hard to reconcile these with the single heavenly *kitāb* that was identified earlier. Not so for Madigan who argued that the multiplicity of books, in this and similar verses (e.g., Q 29:47), is best understood as referring to an overarching singular *kitāb*, which is necessary for the Qur'an's claim to authority.[61] This certainly fits with what has been discussed regarding how the apparent plurality of books is to be understood as a singular *kitāb* with a variety of functions. In contrast, Sinai, argues that this passage refers to 'terrestrial books', that is to scripture and not to the celestial source;

[61] Madigan, *The Qur'ān's self-image*, 175–77.

according to him not only is there the idea of an all-encompassing celestial source book in the Qur'an, but also the revelations can themselves be designated as *kitāb*.[62] Sinai adduces other verses as evidence, such as Q 43:21, 'Or did We bring them a Book (*kitāb*) before it to which they hold?' and Q 46:12 'Yet before it was the Book of Moses (*kitāb Mūsā*) for a model and a mercy; and this is a Book confirming (*kitābun muṣaddiqun*), in Arabic tongue'. That the Qur'anic revelations in these verses seem to be elevated to a scriptural status in the form of a book is more than likely, as well as earlier revelations. In Q 43:21 the 'before it' which, as Sinai maintains, must refer to the Qur'anic revelations, entails that the recitations were considered a *kitāb*, while the latter Q 46:12 tells of 'this' which is a 'book confirming' what came before it and follows the book of Moses (*kitāb Mūsā*), another terrestrial book.[63] While Sinai is correct in saying that there appears to be instances in the Qur'an where *kitāb* refers to the Qur'anic revelations themselves and previous scriptures—which might well be the case for the *kutub* in Q 4:136; otherwise we might expect the dual form if these 'books' are referring to the two mentioned earlier in the verse—I am not so convinced that this is the case where *al-kitāb* is said to be 'sent down'. This is because it is the celestial source book that is generally characterised as being 'sent down' to the Messenger, but at the same time it is denied that he ever received a material formation of it on earth. The reference to the second *al-kitāb* in Q 4:136 which was sent down 'before it' might be referencing a terrestrial book of earlier revelations, although it is noteworthy that this was 'sent down' and is therefore also indicative of a heavenly archetype. The fact that it appears that the celestial source book was sent down on two different occasions need not cause any problems: the same book can be sent down at different times. Indeed, it is also be possible to view this verse as alluding to the idea that earlier revelations originate in the same celestial archetype, although it is likely that their earthly manifestations vary—for example, Moses is said to have been given tablets (*alwāḥ*, Q 7:145).

Additional evidence that it is the celestial source book, *al-kitāb*, which is 'sent down' can be found in the characteristic introductory formulae which stand at the top of many suras of the middle and late Meccan periods. The prevalent formula 'these are the signs of the Book' (*tilka āyātu 'l-kitābi*) includes the notion of sending

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[62] Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 129–33.
[63] Sinai, 130.

down in two introductions in Q 12:1-2 '…These are the signs of the Manifest Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) / We have sent it down as an Arabic recitation (*tilka āyātu 'l-kitābi 'l-mubīni / innā anzalnāhu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*)' and 13:1, 'These are the verses of the Book (*tilka āyātu 'l-kitābi 'l-mubīn*); and that which has been sent down to you (*wa-lladhī unzila ilayka*)…'.[64] It is not unreasonable to read the *wa-lladhī* here as referring to *al-kitāb*, the celestial source book. Another formula in the introductions, albeit referring to an indefinite noun is *kitābun* + asyndetic relative clause. Two of these include the verb *anzala*, Q 14:1 'a Book (*kitābun*) which We have sent down to you (*kitābun anzalnāhu ilayka*).[65] The prevalent phrase *tanzīlu 'l-kitābi*, 'the sending down of the Book', which occurs in introductory sections on five occasions, also makes it clear that it is the celestial source book that is sent down, for example in Q 32:2 'The sending down of the Book (*tanzīlu 'l-kitābi*), wherein no doubt is, from the Lord of all Being'.[66] The word *tanzīl* is thus understood as a verbal noun as opposed to a proper noun for the revelation.

Similar characterisations of the celestial source book as a *tanzīl* 'sending down' are found elsewhere, although we are on less secure ground because they are qualifying an indefinite *kitāb*. Once again, however, it is possible to interpret these instances as referring to the celestial archetype. In Q 41:2-3 the indefinite *tanzīl* appears, 'A sending down (*tanzīl*) from the Merciful, the Compassionate / A Book whose signs have been distinguished as an Arabic recitation (*kitābun fuṣṣilat āyātuhu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*)'. The indefinite *tanzīl* refers to the indefinite *kitāb*, which is the celestial source book because it is this which is then explained or elucidated (*faṣṣala*) as an Arabic recitation.[67] Similarly, in Q 41:42 the phrase 'a sending down (*tanzīl*) from One All-wise, All-laudable' appears as a predicate after a series of suffixes *–hu*, which refer to a 'mighty book' (*kitāb ʾazīz*) in the previous verse (Q 41:41) and is qualified as a 'sending down'. One particularly striking example of this type occurs in the Q 56:77-80:

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[64] For other examples of this formula although lacking any reference to sending down, see Q 10, 15, 26, 27, 28, 31.
[65] See also Q 7:2.
[66] See also Q 39, 40, 45, 46.
[67] The relationship between the celestial source and the revelations is discussed in the next section of the chapter.

77 It is surely a noble recitation (*la-qurʾānun karīmun*),
78 in a hidden Book (*fī kitābin maknūnin*),
79 none shall touch it (*lā yamassuhu*) except the purified,
80 a sending down (*tanzīlun*) from the Lord of all Being.

Verse 77 informs us that 'it'—the revelation or a part thereof—is a noble recitation, which is in a hidden book, i.e., the celestial archetype. The enclitic in verse 79 '*yamassu-hu*' refers to the hidden book, detailing that none but the purified shall touch it. Verse 80 is the final qualification of the hidden book as a *tanzīl* from God. There are other examples where the indefinite *kitāb* seems to be referring to the celestial archetype and is qualified as 'sent down'. Twice this is the case regarding the Messenger: Q 14:1 includes the *kitābun* + asyndetic relative clause formula, which belongs to the introductory oaths sections and reference the celestial source, '…A Book We have sent down to thee (*kitābun anzalnāhu ilayka*)', while Q 38:29 includes the same formula: 'A Book We have sent down to thee, blessed (*kitābun anzalnāhu ilayka mubārakun*)'.

In addition to the verses just discussed, on several occasions it is stated that God sent down 'the book' (*al-kitāb*) to 'you all', i.e., the audience of the recitations, which is indicated by the 2nd person plural pronominal suffix *-kum*. The phenomenon of the audience being addressed in the second person plural is a common occurrence in the Qur'an and it is clear that this is the case in these verses. For example, in Q 4:140 the audience are reminded not to sit with those who disbelieve, otherwise they will suffer the eschatological consequences—an instruction which God has already sent down upon them in 'the Book' (*nazzala ʿalaykum fī 'l-kitābi*). In Q 6:114 it is detailed that 'For it is He who sent down to you the Book well-elucidated (*anzala ilaykum al-kitāb mufaṣṣalan*)'. The verse then implores the audience to not be of the doubters (*fa-lā takūnanna mina 'l-mumtarīna*). Finally, in Q 21:10 the celestial archetype is referred to in the indefinite, 'Now We have sent down to you a Book (*la-qad anzalnā ilaykum kitāban*) wherein is your Reminder (*dhikrukum*); will you not understand?'. This verse includes a polemical question, which again underscores that it is the audience of the recitation who are being directly addressed; as well as the fact that it contains their 'Reminder'. These verses are significant because they underscore the problem of understanding the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* in a metaphorical sense that indicates a communication process: how is it possible that the celestial source book is 'revealed' to non-prophets?

On the three occasions where there is no patient to whom the book (*al-kitāb*) is sent down, the verses are clearly referring to the celestial source, as it is not qualified in the sentences. For instance, in Q 7:196 'My Protector is God who sent down the Book (*nazzala 'l-kitāba*)'.[68] There is a single verse, Q 6:91, where *al-kitāb* is followed by a relative clause and there is no patient, where the Jews are charged with writing down *al-kitāb*, 'Say: "Who sent down the Book that Moses brought as a light and a guidance to men (*man anzala 'l-kitāba 'lladhī jāʾa bi-hi Mūsā*')? You put it into parchments (*qarāṭīsa*), revealing them, and hiding much." Given the relative clause it is possible to view *al-kitāb* as referring to a terrestrial book. It is better read, however, as a reference to the celestial archetype as it is then indicative of the distance between the celestial source and the text on the parchment which the Jews possess. This verse is immediately followed in Q 6:92 with an affirmation that 'This is a Book which We have sent down (*hādhā kitābun anzalnāhu*), blessed and confirming that which was before it'. Given the demonstrative pronoun it would seem to be referring to the Qur'anic revelations themselves which constitute a *kitāb* in their own right; however, the reference to it being 'sent down' and the confirmatory nature of it are echoed in many verses referring to the celestial source. As will be shown, there is indeed a sense of identity between the celestial archetype and the revelations themselves and therefore it might not necessarily be problematic to understand this verse as an indication of the proximity of the two.

Harder to explain are Q 2:213 and 57:25 where *al-kitāb* is sent down with other messengers (*rusul*), 'and He sent down with them the Book… (*wa-anzala maʿahum al-kitāba*)'. Unusually, these verses include the preposition *maʿa* which as already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter denotes an 'association and connection in time and place'.[69] 'The Book' is seemingly, then, 'with' the messengers. One would be inclined to conclude that *al-kitāb* refers to previous scriptures in these verses, as it would seem unlikely that the celestial source book could be literally 'with' the messengers. Alternatively, it might be construed that a part of the celestial source is with them; or perhaps the preposition is here used in a metaphorical sense and so the celestial source book is 'with' them, not physically, but in some other way. Either way, these last few verses would represent minor exceptions to the rule that it is the celestial source book that is sent down.

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[68] See also Q 2:176, 42:17.
[69] Wright, *Grammar*, II: 164.

In this section it has been demonstrated that God 'sent down' the celestial source book. It is detailed on numerous occasions that it was sent down to the Qur'anic Messenger but it is also stated in several verses that it was sent down to the audience of the revelations. This clearly highlights two significant problems of understanding the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* as referring to a communication process or a 'revealing': first, it would seem to imply that the revelation would have been communication all at once, for if the celestial archetype is 'revealed', which contains in the very least the entirety of the revelation, then surely all would have been said and done so to speak. Second, it naturally leads to the conclusion that the contents of the celestial source book are readily available, not only to prophets, but to the audience of the recitations too. Both of these premises, however, go against significant literary aspects of the Qur'anic text, i.e., its situated character. It is also contrary to the way that the Qur'an portrays the celestial archetype which remains, as Madigan has rightly pointed out, 'elusive'. [70]

1.4.3 The relationship of the celestial source book to the Qur'anic revelations

To appreciate the Qur'an's portrayal of the availability and accessibility of the celestial source book it is necessary to begin by considering the relationship of the celestial source book to the revelations themselves. I have already discussed the problematic picture of heaven filled with multiple books as pointed out long ago by Widengren who envisaged a single heavenly book that had a variety of functions.[71] Widengren and most Western and Islamic scholars alike, however, continued to accept the assumption that the Qur'an itself must derive *in toto* from the celestial source book. It is perhaps this problem which led Jeffery to postulate a "*kitāb* as a heavenly book" vs. a "*kitāb* as scripture" for it is difficult to imagine that such eternal record books would contain information on the prophet's household, community debates and lengthy polemics, all of which feature in the Qur'an. Angelika Neuwirth, in her pericopisation theory, directly addresses this issue and questions the assumption that the Qur'an derives *in toto* from the celestial source book. Neuwirth instead envisages that there is a distinction between divine speech in general and

[70] Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 167.
[71] See section 1.4.1.

excerpts from the celestial source book. Her theory is that specific middle sections of the Qur'anic text are marked as excerpts from the celestial archetype by introductory formulas (e.g., *tilka āyātu 'l-kitābi*, *kitābun unzila / anzalnāhu ilayka / tanzīlu 'l-kitābi*) and various concluding sections, which include the use of a free-floating accusative suffix, *-hu*.[72] She further maintains that it is these middle sections of the tripartite suras, which are usually narrative sections, which are the scriptural 'pericopes', whereas the framing sections (prior and posterior to the introductory and concluding formulas) are not themselves part of the celestial archetype, although they still constitute divine speech.[73]

Sinai has raised problems with the pericope premise, citing that there are several tripartite suras which do not include lengthy narrative middle sections (e.g., Q 13, 31, 32, 39, 41, and 45).[74] He prefers to understand the relationship between the celestial archetype and the Qur'anic revelations as that of a 'rendering' from the celestial source, as opposed to literal excerpts.[75] This is shown, he maintains, in the transformation of *al-kitāb*—the celestial mode of storage—into a *qurʾān*, which is its earthly mode of display, a 'recitation'.[76] In Q 12:1-2 it is the 'Manifest Book' (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) which is 'sent down' as an 'Arabic recitation' (*innā anzalnāhu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*).[77] In Q 41:2-3 this is again indicated when the celestial source is transformed into an 'Arabic recitation', 'A sending down (*tanzīlun*) from the Merciful, the Compassionate. A Book (*kitābun*) whose verses have been elucidated as an Arabic recitation for a people having knowledge (*kitābun fuṣṣilat āyātuhu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan li-qawmin yaʾlamūna*).' The process of the celestial source book (*kitāb*) transforming into an earthly recitation (*qurʾān*) is labelled as *tafṣīl* in this verse. This is also the case in Q 10:37, where 'this recitation' (*hādhā 'l-qurʾān*) is qualified as *tafṣīl al-kitāb*.[78] Sinai interprets the term *tafṣīl* and its corresponding verbal form *faṣṣala* as not only meaning 'detailed elucidation' but due to the verbal

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[72] Neuwirth, 'From Recitation through Liturgy to Canon', 149–50.
[73] Neuwirth, 150.
[74] Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 117.
[75] Sinai, 117.
[76] Sinai, 120. For the reading of *qurʾān* as a verbal noun 'recitation' as opposed to a proper noun for the revelations, see William Graham, 'The earliest meaning of "Qurʾān"', *Die Welt des Islams* 23 (1984): 361–77.
[77] On the vernacular nature of the recitation, see Stefan Wild, 'An Arabic Recitation. The Meta-Linguistics of Qurʾānic Revelation', in *Self-referentiality in the Qurʾān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 135–57.
[78] See also Q 6:114, 7:52.

formula *faṣṣala shayʾan li-*, which has a built-in reference to the interlocutor, it is thus an elucidation for a specific audience at a specific time.[79] The transmission from *kitāb* to *qurʾān*, according to Sinai, is not simply a matter of translation, it is rather a 'rendering' which adapts the eternal truths which are present in the celestial source book and tailors them to a given environment.[80] Sinai makes it appropriately clear that the celestial archetype remains to a certain extent inaccessible, even if it is accessed through divine revelation, because there is a 'need to tailor such revelations to a specific target audience' and therefore 'the *kitāb* as such is at no one's disposal, not even in the form of excerpts'.[81]

If this is the case, and I believe Sinai's argument to be quite convincing, how is it possible that the verbs *nazzala/anzala* refer to a communicative event, when this would mean that the celestial archetype itself was 'revealed' or 'transmitted' to not only the Messenger, but to the audience of the recitations too? This reading undermines any such distinction between the celestial archetype and its earthly manifestation and yet the ontological distance between the revelations and their celestial archetype appears to be respected throughout the Qur'an. Moreover, this understanding is also, patently, at odds with the *ad rem*, i.e., the situated mode of communication of the Qur'an, where polemical debates and references to contemporary battles are contained alongside episodes of sacred salvation history. Rather, the 'sending down' must be understood as a spatial event whereby the celestial source was 'sent down' by God. At this point, however, there can be no disclosure of its contents.

It is not only the celestial source book that is 'sent down' by God in the Qur'an but also the recitation itself (*al-qurʾān*). This might be explained by the certain proximity between the celestial archetype (*kitāb*) and the Messenger's recitation/s (*qurʾān*) as they are, despite being carefully separated from the celestial archetype, also in some sense, identical with it. This is clear from revelation announcements such as 'those are the signs of the clear book (*tilka āyātu 'l-kitābi 'l-mubīni*)' (e.g., Q 26) where the demonstrative pronoun refers to the revelation, or more specifically to the text that follows, and infers that the content is shared between the two: the signs of the clear book are the signs of the revelation. The

[79] Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 120–21.
[80] Sinai, 123–24.
[81] Sinai, 123.

identicalness of the revelations vis-à-vis the celestial source book helps to explain the proximity of *kitāb* and *qurʾān* in Q 15:1 'Those are the signs of the Book and of a manifest recitation (*tilka āyātu 'l-kitābi wa-qurʾānin mubīnin*)' and Q 27:1 'Those are the signs of the recitation and a manifest book (*tilka āyātu 'l-qurʾāni wa-kitābin mubīnin*)' where the text that follows is characterised both as 'signs which are recited' and 'signs from a book', i.e., both performatively and genetically respectively as Sinai has observed.[82] However, rather than thinking of the recitations in terms of their identicalness to the celestial source book, *kitāb*, it might be preferable to think of *qurʾān* as an aspect of the celestial source book: it is a feature of the celestial source book and is therefore identical with it, but it can also be considered to a certain degree separate from it. Thus, it makes sense when we are told on seven occasions that 'the recitation' (*al-qurʾān*) was 'sent down'.[83] Because if it is an aspect of the celestial source book, it must have therefore been present when it was 'sent down'.

The sense of identicality of the recitation to the celestial source book can then be extended to include the nouns which most probably denote the revelation itself, parts thereof or its function.[84] Many of these are said to be 'sent down'. God sent down to the Messenger 'clear verses/signs' (*āyāt bayyināt*, Q 2:99, 57:9); 'the remembrance' (*al-dhikr*, Q 16:44) and 'the light' (*al-nūr*, Q 7:157). Similarly, God sent down to the audience 'verses that make clear' (*āyāt mubayyināt*) and an 'exemplar' (*mathal*) in Q 24:34. A 'reminder' (*dhikr*) is sent down to 'men of understanding' (*ulī al-albāb*, Q 65:10) and a 'clear light' (*nūr mubīn*) is sent to mankind (*al-nās*, Q 4:174) while a '*sūra*' is also said to be 'sent down' on several occasions (e.g., Q 9:124 and 127).[85]

Moreover, on multiple occasions we are not informed what is sent down, although it is clear that these verses are referring to the revelation or parts thereof. In several verses, what is sent down to the Messenger is unspecified. Instead of an active verb + direct object structure there is a passive verb with a relative pronoun, usually *mā*, as the subject. In these instances, the relative pronoun is often a direct

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[82] Sinai, 124.
[83] See, Q 2:185; 5:101; 12:2; 17:106; 20:113; 25:31; 43:31.
[84] The direct objects that follows are generally considered to refer to the Qur'anic text in some sense or another. However, for the limits of reading such nouns as 'self-referential', see Madigan, 'Qurʾān self-referentiality'.
[85] It is unlikely that *sūra* in the Qur'an designates a chapter *per se*, but more likely a fluid section of the revelation, see *EQ*, s.v. 'Sūra (s)' (Neuwirth).

object of a preceding verb: for example, the Messenger or the believers are told to believe (e.g., Q 4:60) in what was sent down (*mā unzila*) or to listen to it (Q 5:83). In other verses, the audience are told to follow what was sent down to them from their Lord, Q 7:3, 'Follow what has been sent down to you (*ittabiʿū mā unzila ilaykum*) from your Lord' and similarly in Q 39:55 'And follow the fairest of what has been sent down to you (*ittabiʿū aḥsana mā unzila ilaykum*) from your Lord'. The audience state that they believe in what was sent down to them and to the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) in Q 3:199 'And some there are of the People of the Book who believe in God, and what has been sent down unto you (*mā unzila ilaykum*), and what has been sent down unto them (*mā unzila ilayhim*)'. The People of the Book are also told to uphold (*aqāmū*) what was sent down (*mā unzila*) to them from their Lord in Q 5:66 and 68. In Q 29:46 the audience are told to say that they believe in what has been sent down to them and to the People of the Book, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us (*āmannā bi-lladhī unzila ilaynā*) , and what has been sent down to you (*wa-unzila ilaykum*).' [86] God 'sent down' to those who believe (*alladhīna āmanū*, Q 3:72), to the prophets Abraham, Ishmael and Jacob and *al-asbāṭ* (Q 2:136, 3:84) and to whom he wills (*man yashāʾu*, Q 2:90, 16:2). All of these verses likely reference a celestial event when either the Qur'anic revelation—signified by a variety of nouns—or even earlier revelations were 'sent down', housed, if you will, within the celestial archetype. The fact that this was a single event regarding the Qur'anic revelation will be taken up in the final section of the chapter. On this point, it is not without significance that that the Torah (*al-Tawrāt*) and the Gospel (*al-Injīl*) are said to have been sent down by God (Q 3:5 and 5:44); inferring, as it does, not only a shared divine origin but also the possibility that they emanate from the same celestial archetype. This was already indicated in regard to Q 4:136 above, although this would entail the celestial archetype being 'sent down' on more than one occasion (i.e., when it was the source of earlier revelations).

The preceding discussion establishes another reason why the best possible interpretation of the verbs *nazzala/anzala* is that they denote a spatial event and not a communicative one. The celestial source book is kept at a distance at all times and is not directly accessible, even to prophets, as it must first go through some sort of transformation so that it is pertinent to the given historical situation that the

[86] See also Q 5:59.

revelation is proffered. That is not to say, however, that to some extent the celestial archetype and the revelations are not identical, as indeed, the revelation and parts thereof should be considered as 'aspects' of the celestial source book. All were present when the celestial source was 'sent down' and therefore all are presented as being part of this spatial event. If the verses which include revelatory objects are read, as I think they should be, in the same manner as the verses which include the verbs *nazzala/anzala* and non-revelatory objects, then it is a spatial event that has taken place. The result of this is that the revelation itself was not disclosed at that time but definitely 'sent down'. Importantly, this reading respects the distance between the Qur'anic revelations and their celestial source as well as rejecting the need to view the root *n-z-l* in two totally different lights in the Qur'an, i.e., literally (with non-revelatory objects) and metaphorically (with revelatory objects).

To summarise, in the second section of this chapter the argument has been presented that a) there is a notion of a celestial source book for the Qur'anic revelations, b) that it is the celestial source book which is 'sent down' and by extension also its 'aspects', and c) that this event is a spatial event and not a communicative one. In other words, its contents were not disclosed, only 'sent down'. This is for three reasons: firstly, because the celestial source book contains the entirety of the Qur'an, any suggestion that it was communicated to the Messenger when it was 'sent down' is against the *ad rem* mode of the revelation. Secondly, the celestial source book remains to a certain degree elusive and is never directly accessible, not even by prophets. This is shown in the clear separation the Qur'an maintains between its celestial source and its earthy manifestation as a recitation (*qurʾān*), and therefore it cannot have been communicated during its descent. And thirdly, it is not only the Messenger to whom the celestial source book and its aspects are 'sent down', but also the audience of the recitations. Thus, if in these verses the root *n-z-l* represents a disclosing of the celestial source book, this is equally accessible to mankind as it is to prophets. What I have consistently emphasised in this chapter is that the root *n-z-l* is concerned with spatial descent and should be understood literally and not metaphorically. The final part of the chapter will elucidate the significance of the spatial reading and what I term 'the celestial event' wherein the celestial archetype and by extension the revelatory message itself was 'sent down' in the celestial sphere.

1.4.4 The celestial event

Let us first turn to the question of whether there were multiple spatial events or a single one: was the revelatory message sent down at once or serially? The notion of a single descent is alluded to in Q 97:1-5:

> 1 Indeed, We sent it down during the Night of Decree (*innā anzalnāhu fī laylati ʻl-qadri*)
> 2 And what shall teach thee what is the Night of Decree?
> 3 The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months;
> 4 in it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, upon every command (*tanazzalu ʻl-malāʾikatu wa-l-rūḥu fīhā bi-idhni rabbihim min kulli amrin*)
> 5 Peace it is, till the rising of dawn.

The occurrence of a free-floating accusative suffix *-hu* in *anzalnāhu* requires explanation. As has been seen, such free-floating suffixes, most often *-hu* but occasionally a free-floating relative pronoun *alladhī* or demonstrative pronoun *tilka*, are self-referential terms which refer to the revelation itself. However, whether these refer to the revelation as a whole or parts of it remains, at times, unclear; particular attention needs to be paid to the use of these suffixes and pronouns in the earliest revelations, like Q 97, as it is unlikely that the Qur'an conceived itself as a literary unity beyond the individual recitations at this stage.[87] In this verse the suffix might refer to the sura itself, or as Neuwirth has suggested, to something beyond the text, although her reading that this is something analogous to the 'embodiments' of the word of God in neighbouring traditions is somewhat doubtful.[88] If it does refer to something beyond the text itself as Neuwirth suggests, it is possible that Q 44:2-6 might be significant in this regard because it seems to be describing the events of the same night:

> 2 By the clear book (*wa-l-kitābi ʻl-mubīni*)
> 3 Indeed, We have sent it down in a blessed night (*innā anzalnāhu fī laylatin mubārakatin*), We are ever warning
> 4 therein every wise bidding is determined (*fīhā yufraqu kullu amrin ḥakīmin*)
> 5 as a bidding from Us (*amran min ʿindinā*), We are ever sending
> 6 as a mercy from thy Lord, surely He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing

[87] Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 110.
[88] Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 2013, 124–25.

In this series of verses it is clear that the suffix *-hu* in *anzalnāhu* refers to 'the clear Book' (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) in the preceding verse, which is the celestial archetype. The task is to determine if both verses refer to the same night because while this does not unequivocally confirm that the enclitic *-hu* in Q 97:1 refers to the celestial source book—although it makes it more probable—it does determine that a single event is being referenced. K. Wagtendonk argued that the *laylat al-qadr*, which he translated as the 'night of measuring out', refers to a cyclical judgement scenario.[89] However, despite recalling several instances of the root *q-d-r* to argue that the word *qadr* should be translated in this way, his argument is particularly unconvincing because Q 97 contains none of the threatening elements which are so prevalent in verses referring to eschatological scenarios, but rather emphasises the peaceful character of the night.[90] Rather, the *laylat al-qadr*, preferably translated as the 'night of Decree', seems to refer to a type of scenario where matters are determined.

This is evident not only in its name but also in the details given in Q 97:4 where the angels and the Spirit descend 'upon every command (*amr*)'. The idea is suggested quite clearly in Q 44:4 where in the 'blessed night' (*layla mubāraka*) 'every wise bidding is determined (*fīhā yufraqu kullu amrin ḥakīmin*)'. It would seem that Q 44:2-6 is expanding upon the description of the night already given in Q 97 with details regarding both what occurs in that night as well as what was specifically 'sent down', i.e., the celestial archetype, *al-kitāb*. In fact, some scholars have argued that Q 97:4 is a later addition to the original sura—presumably given that it interrupts the rhyming pattern of the other verses and is somewhat longer.[91] Thus, the meaning of the 'original' version might have only referred to the sending down of the revelatory message, which was then expanded to include additional information regarding the deterministic nature of the night.

It is also possible that the updating of Q 97 as well as the additional information presented in Q 44:3-6 is evidence that the *laylat al-qadr* was already known to the listeners of the Qur'anic revelations and the matter of predestination or

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[89] K. Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 85–86.
[90] Wagendonk admits this himself, see *Wagtendonk,* 86, 95. See also the comment by Nicolai Sinai, 'Kommentar: Sure 97: Die Bestimmung (al-Qadr)', accessed 1 August 2019, http://www.corpuscoranicum.de/kommentar/einleitung.
[91] See Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 231; Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran: Handkommentar mit Übersetzung. Bd 1: Poetische Prophetie. Frühmekkanische Suren*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011), 97, 100–102; Sinai, 'Kommentar: Sure 97'.

determination reflects their understanding of this already auspicious night. For example, A.J. Wensinck has argued that the idea of a night of decrees was already common in Jewish tradition in which man's fate for the coming year was determined, and that such an idea was already prevalent in Mesopotamia.[92] For Wensinck, the *laylat al-qadr* is a New Year's night, while others yet have related the night to the Christian eve of the Nativity and the Jewish Day of Atonement.[93] Such specific lineage for the night in question might be hard to prove, but it would not be without precedent that an already auspicious night was adopted and adapted by an emerging tradition.[94] It should also be remembered, however, that important additional information regarding the celestial event is also included: in Q 97:1 it is not possible to determine exactly what was 'sent down', perhaps because at this stage the specifics of the spatial event are unclear, but this is clarified in Q 44:3 which clearly evokes the celestial source book as being 'sent down'. Regardless of the night's specific lineage, it would appear that Q 97 and 44 are referring to the same night; even the name *layla mubāraka* makes perfect sense as another nomenclature of the *laylat al-qadr* which is described as night which is worth a thousand months. Surely, that is a 'blessed night'.

Another interesting observation is that the majority of instances in the Qur'an which reference the celestial event are in the perfect. The act is complete, which is in direct contrast to the revelations themselves which are depicted as ongoing. Verses Q 17:105-6 offer an interesting insight into this distinction:

> 105 With the truth We have sent it down (*anzalnāhu*), and with the truth it has come down (*nazala*); and We have sent thee not except good tidings to bear, and warning,
>
> 106 and a recitation (*qurʾānan*) We have divided, for thee to recite it to mankind over time (*li-taqraʾahu ʿalā 'l-nāsi ʿalā mukthin*), and indeed We have sent it down (*nazzalnāhu tanzīlan*)

The first verse refers to the descent of 'it' (i.e the revelatory message) while the second verse refers to its earthly manifestation as a recitation (*qurʾān*), which is

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[92] A.J. Wensinck, *Arabic new year and the feast of Tabernacles* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke akademie van wetenschappen, 1925), 3.
[93] Richard Bell, *A commentary on the Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991), 564; S.D. Goitein, 'Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting', in *Studies in Islamic history and institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 90–110; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Ramaḍān' (Plessner).
[94] One has to only think of the *hajj* rites in Islamic tradition or the Christian Easter celebration which is based upon an ancient pagan Spring festival.

divided in parts and recited in intervals or over time. The exact meaning of *mukth* in not totally clear given that it is a hapax legomenon in the Qur'an, although its verbal usage refers to remaining, staying or abiding (e.g., Q 13:17) and thus the word is likely indicative of the ongoing nature of the recitation. The method of ongoing recitation is then contrasted again with the single descent of the revelation (*nazzalnāhu tanzīlan*). Both references to the celestial event are followed by syntactical emphasis regarding its finality: in Q 17:105 the verb *anzala* is immediately followed by another reference to its descent (*nazala*) and in Q 17:106, the verb *nazzala* is followed by the absolute object *tanzīl*, which emphasises the action of the principal verb. As is well known, the absolute object *tanzīl* in this verse, along with Q 76:23 discussed below, are commonly understood in both Islamic tradition and scholarly works as referring to a serial mode of descending; thus, they are read as a *ḥāl* construction (i.e., the state or description of circumstances).[95] However, in at least a grammatical sense, the absolute object is here suggestive of an emphatic reading. This verse might even be read with a sense of finality, 'and indeed We have sent it down (once and for all)'.[96] Indeed, this reading would also fit with Q 25:25 when the angels will be 'sent down' (*nuzzila 'l-malāʾikatu tanzīlan*) on that day of the utmost finality, Judgement Day. The emphasis on a single celestial event is marked again in Q 76:23 only this time 'the recitation' (*al-qurʾān*) is the object: 'Indeed We have sent down the recitation on thee (*innā naḥnu nazzalnā ʿalayka 'l-qurʾāna tanzīlan*)'. However, it should not be construed that this means the recitation was 'revealed' in a single proclamation. Rather, it is emphasising that the recitation was part of the celestial event.

Turning to the question of the physicality of the celestial archetype, it is possible to maintain that the celestial archetype is in the form of a material book and that this should be considered separate from the preserved tablet (*lawḥ maḥfuẓ*). As has already been seen, in Q 56:77-80 the revelations are said to be in a hidden book (*kitāb maknūn*) which none but the purified can touch and in Q 80:13 they are

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[95] For example, in Abdel Haleem's recent Qur'an translation Q 76:23 reads, 'We Ourself have sent down this Qur'an to you [Prophet] in gradual revelation'. M. A. Abdel Haleem, *The Qurʾan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 402.

[96] Arthur Droge also makes the case for an emphatic reading of *tanzīl* in Q 17:105-106 and 76:23 in his introduction to his translation of the Qur'an. He goes on to argue that this means that the Qur'an was 'revealed' all at once and not over time. The multiple problems of such a reading has, hopefully, been made clear in this chapter. See, *The Qur'ān*, xxi–xxvi.

presented as in high-honoured pages (*suḥuf mukarram*) which are said to be in the hands of scribes (*bi-aydī safaratin*). Both verses imply a certain physicality regarding the celestial archetype. Similar to this is the idea that the celestial archetype is written in heaven: in Q 82:10-12 we are told that noble writers record all that is done, 'Yet there are over you watchers, noble writers (*kirāman kātibīna*), who know whatever you do.' As the celestial source book is an all-encompassing concept in the Qur'an, which includes such record books, it follows that at least part of the celestial source book is written by scribes—it might be that these 'pages' form the pages of *al-kitāb*, the celestial source book.

However, it is also said that the revelation is in a preserved tablet (*lawḥ maḥfuẓ*, Q 85:22). The image of the heavenly archetype or types is not fixed. Widengren maintained that the variation of the image of the heavenly archetype in the Qur'an is directly related to Biblical precedents, which had changed from tablets to books due to developments in writing from and writing materials.[97] This led him to conclude that the variations of the concrete image of the 'heavenly book' was inherited and all possibilities adopted in the Qur'an.[98] However, while it may be somewhat speculative, it appears that the celestial source 'book' is separate from the preserved tablet because nowhere is the preserved tablet said to be 'sent down'. The preserved tablet remains, as far as we are aware, in its place with God in heaven. This point was observed by A.J. Wensinck at the beginning of the 20th century who described the 'loosening of the Qur'an from the preserved tablet'; although one would perhaps prefer to phrase this as a 'loosening' of the celestial source book from the preserved tablet.[99] It is likely that *al-kitāb* forms the immediate celestial and heavenly archetype of the revelations, not necessarily the preserved tablet. The Qur'an, however, still ultimately derives from the preserved tablet if the relationship between *al-kitāb* and *lawḥ maḥfūẓ* is analogous to the relationship of the revelations to the celestial source book. In this case, though, it is the celestial source book which is an aspect of the preserved tablet; it is therefore identical with it and yet physically separate from it; it might even be understood as a copy of the original tablet. The celestial source book can then be 'sent down' and the preserved tablet remain in its place, although the content of the former is certainly derived from the latter.

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[97] Widengren, *Muḥammad*, 121–22.
[98] Widengren, 122.
[99] Wensinck, *Arabic new year and the feast of Tabernacles*, 2–3.

Two questions remain: whence is the celestial source book sent down and where is its destination? For the former, nowhere does is specifically state in the Qur'an where the celestial source book resides, although taking the overall picture into account, as already shown in this chapter, it is clear that it is with God in heaven. Heaven (*al-samāʾ*) in the Qur'an is said to have seven levels, which is mentioned in several different verses.[100] That the heavens appear to be topologically understood as atop one another is indicated by the word *ṭibāq* in Q 67:3 'He who created seven heavens one upon another (*ṭibāqan*)' and again in Q 71:15, 'Have you not regarded how God created seven heavens one upon another (*ṭibāqan*)'. Although the root *ṭ-b-q* is quite rare in the Qur'an, it also occurs in Q 84:19 which describes how the changing of twilight into night and the transition to a full moon will be ridden in 'stages' (*ṭabaqan ʿan ṭabaqin*). Thus, *ṭibāq* is likely describing the levels of heaven in Q 67:3 and Q 71:15.

The Qur'an gives details of 'the lowest heaven' (*al-samāʾ al-dunyā*) wherein it is stated that stars, constellations and meteors (*rujūm*) are present.[101] It even states that the devils are barred from listening into the 'high assembly' (*al-malaʾ al-aʿlā*) which takes place in the 'lowest heaven' (Q 37:6-10) and that if they do meteors are hurled at them (Q 67:5).[102] The reference here might be to an assembly of divine degrees, possibly the same one as that on the *laylat al-qadr* described in Q 97 and 44. Indeed, Q 97:4 depicts a type of heavenly assembly when we are told that the angels and the spirit descend on the *laylat al-qadr* wherein every matter will be determined (Q 44:4). It is also stated that the angels assist in the divine sending down of revelation (Q 2:97, 16:102, 26:193-4). If, then, the 'high assembly' of Q 37:6-10, which takes place in the 'lowest heaven', is the same assembly as that described in Q 97 and 44, it would seem probable that the celestial source was 'sent down' with the angels from its place with the preserved tablet—most likely in the highest heaven—to the lowest heaven. We might even imagine that such yearly decrees are added to the celestial source book by the heavenly scribes. Importantly, the celestial source book remains protected in the lowest heaven by cosmic phenomena.

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[100] See Q 2:29; 17:44; 23:86; 41:12; 65:12; 67:3; 71:15.
[101] See Q 37:6; 41:2; 67:5.
[102] For more on this, see Gerald Hawting, 'Eavesdropping on the Heavenly Assembly and the Protection of the Revelation from Demonic Corruption', in *Self-referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 25–37.

The above observations must be considered somewhat speculative. Perhaps the best evidence that the celestial source book is sent down and yet remains in the celestial realm is that it is allusive, remote and never within reach. It could never have been 'sent down' from the heavenly realm to the earthly because the revelations do not manifest on earth as a physical book, but rather, as a series of oral proclamations (*qurʾān*). It is exactly this method of delivery which led the Messenger's opponents to ask in Q 25:32 '"Why has the recitation not been sent down upon him all at once? (*law lā nuzzila ʿalayhi 'l-qurʾānu jumlatan wāḥidatan*)?"', while it is also clear that they expect something physical, in fact, a *kitāb*, to reach the earthy realm as result of it being 'sent down' (e.g., Q 4:153 and Q 17:93).

With an admittedly certain amount of trepidation it has been possible to describe the celestial event in more detail. First, the celestial source book (*al-kitāb*), which is best understood as a material book, resides with God in the upper heavens alongside the preserved tablet (*lawḥ maḥfūẓ*). When the celestial source book and by extension the revelation itself was 'sent down' it remained in the celestial realm; possibly moving from the upper to the lower heavens. This celestial event took place on the Night of Decree, a night which might have been already auspicious in pre-Islamic Arabia and was possibly related to man's fate for the coming year. It is possible that this added further prestige to an already transformative event: the night that the revelatory message was 'sent down'.

The celestial event is the first stage of the revelatory process when the celestial source book is made available, although not necessarily accessible. We have already seen that when God sent down 'rain', his 'divine aid' (*sakīna*) or 'deliverance' (*furqān*) it is through this act that God intervenes in history by breaking the barrier between the two-tier universe. This is not to say that such interventions are available to everyone though: the *sakīna* was patently only accessible by the Messenger and the *furqān* was granted to the emerging community. The same may be said for when God 'sent down' the celestial source book to the Messenger or even to the audience of the recitations; only in this case its lack of accessibility is not due to a restriction on the intended recipients but because it remains in the celestial realm, remote and transcendent and waiting to be accessed by divine revelation—although even in this instance its content is in some way modified. It is certainly a sign of God's benevolence towards mankind that the celestial event has taken place, but it

has not—as yet—resulted in a revelatory message being delivered to a prophet and thereon to mankind.

CHAPTER 2

DIVINE COMMUNICATION (*WAḤY*)

The root *w-ḥ-y* occurs some 78 times in the Qur'an and is widely regarded as one of the most important terms for the Qur'an's concept of how God communicates to man. When dealing with the term *waḥy* and its cognate verbal form IV *awḥā* it has been common for scholars to translate the term dependent upon the supposed content of the communication. However, in all instances in the Qur'an, the root *w-ḥ-y* is a signifier of a communication process and it is this process alone that should define the term. Through a thorough analysis of the root *w-ḥ-y* in pre-Islamic poetry and the Qur'an, I will demonstrate that the semantics of the term found in pre-Islamic poetry, which highlight both the communication's unintelligibility to the outside observer and its meaning to the original recipient, are carried over into the Qur'an, albeit now considerably realigned. It is now through *waḥy* that God communicates to, in the main, His messengers. This communication method is not only exceptional because the source is God, but also because by employing the root *w-ḥ-y*, it is emphasised that it is only God's elect that can understand the revelatory message.

2.1 The root *w-ḥ-y* in pre-Islamic poetry

The root *w-ḥ-y* is possibly cognate with the Aramaic, Syriac and Hebrew *ḥ-w-y*, where it means 'to declare, tell' in Aramaic and Hebrew, although it has a wider semantic range in Syriac ('to show, make manifest, show oneself').[1] Aside the shared semantics indicating that a form of communication has taken place, the possible cognates offer little further insight into the Arabic meaning. The meta-thesis also makes the case less conclusive as to whether they represent true cognates. Moreover,

[1] Zammit, *Qurʾānic Arabic*, 429; see also Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin: Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum* (Piscataway: Eisenbrauns; Gorgias Press, 2009); Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 296.

the root is exceptionally rare in the Hebrew Bible, occurring in only six verses.[2] In contrast to this, the root is well attested in pre-Islamic poetry and it is this material that will prove most useful when attempting to understand its meaning or range of meanings in the Qur'an. This contextual reading is perhaps particularly important for the root *w-ḥ-y* because its usages in pre-Islamic poetry represent a limited semantic range, which is firmly within the profane register, and yet it is this term in the Qur'an that comes to primarily signify the divine activity of God communicating to His messengers. By defining the root *w-ḥ-y* in its pre-Islamic sense, this will not only shed light on its Qur'anic meaning, but also on the continuity or discontinuity between the root's usage in the two corpora.

2.1.1 The substantive *waḥy*

There are several terms in pre-Islamic poetry that have been understood to refer to writing. James Montgomery collected the relevant verses which include such phrases as *mā khuṭṭa bi-l-qalam* ('the writing of a reed pen'), *kḥatt zubūr* ('the writing of a writ') and *rasm* ('writing').[3] The most prevalent term, however, is the substantive *waḥy*. This is not used in a technical sense to refer an ordinary and clear writing or a decipherable message but is rather signifying a type of communication that the poet cannot decipher.

In all instances the substantive *waḥy* is acting as a simile for a ruined encampment that the poet is alighting upon. This is evident in a poem by ʿAbīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā where the abodes are described as erased by the passing of the wind and rain, just as the writing has upon the rock:

> Who now inhabits the abodes that are visible in al-Ghamr, erased by the passing of the wind and the rain,
> And on the lush bank of Busyān, like the writing (*al-waḥy*) written by a slave on stone.[4]

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[2] See Job 15:17; 32:6, 10, 17; 36:2; Psalms 19:2. Concordance data from *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 296.

[3] See James E. Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment in Ancient Arabic Poetry: A Nexus of Topical Comparisons', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 40, no. 2 (1995): 283–316.

[4] *Li-mani 'l-diyāru talūḥu bi-l-ghamri / darasat li-marri 'l-rīḥi wa-l-qaṭri // fa-bi-shaṭṭi busyāni 'l-riyāghi ka-mā / kataba 'l-ghulāmu 'l-waḥya fī 'l-ṣakhri*. See Yaḥyā Jubūrī, ed., *Qaṣāʾid jāhiliyya nādira* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1982), 200; translation (amended) from Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 298.

Likewise, Labīd b. Rabīʿa utilised the plural (*wuḥiyy*) to denote various writings upon rocks, which are compared to effaced abodes and worn watercourses:

> The abodes, both the stopping-place and the residence, in Minā are effaced; wild are Ghawl and Rijām,
> As are the watercourses of al-Rayyān. Their trace has been stripped bare, worn thin, just as the writings (*ka-l-wuḥiyy*) are retained by their rocks.[5]

Zuhayr b. Shaddād uses the substantive *waḥy* in three of his poems and likens the writing to a vanishing abode:

> An abode belonging to Asmāʾ in al-Ghamrayn, vanishing like the writing (*ka-l-waḥy*), with not even a cairn-stone left by its folk.[6]

Or it may simply be a remnant to which the writing is compared in another poem of Zuhayr's:

> Who now inhabits a remnant like the writing (*ka-l-waḥy*), its dwellings effaced – effaced, there are al-Rass, al-Rusays and ʿĀqil.[7]

What is important to note from these verses is that the writing (*al-waḥy*) is likened to deserted encampments which are in varying states of decay. From the context it is clear that this is no ordinary writing which *waḥy* refers to; it is faded, ruined and decayed, only traces of it remain, just like the deserted encampments likened to it. This is also evident in a poem by Zuhayr where this time the abodes are compared to writing ravished in the torrent bed:

> Who now inhabit the abodes which I chanced upon in the hard ground, like the writing (*ka-l-waḥy*) upon the perdurable rock in the torrent bed.[8]

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[5] *ʿAfati 'l-diyāru maḥalluhā fa-muqāmuhā / bi-minan taʾabbada ghawluhā fa-rijāmuhā // fa-madāfiʿu 'l-Rayyāni ʿurriya rasmuha / khalaqan ka-mā ḍamina 'l-wuhiyya silāmuhā*. See Labīd ibn Rabīʿa, *Sharḥ dīwān Labīd b. Rabīʿa al-ʿĀmirī* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād wa-l-Anbāʾ, 1962), 297; translation (amended) from Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 293.

[6] *Dārun li-Asmāʾa bi-l-ghamrayni māthilatun / ka-l-waḥyi laysa bi-hā min ahlihā arimu*. Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 58; translation from Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 285.

[7] *Li-mani ṭalalun ka-l-waḥyi ʿāfin manāziluh / ʿafā 'l-Rassu minhu fa-l-Rusaysu fa-ʿĀqiluh*. See Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 55; translation from Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 284.

[8] *Li-mani 'l-diyāru ghashītuha bi-l-faḍfadi / Ka-l-waḥyi fī ḥajari 'l-masīli 'l-mukhlidi.* See Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 113. Montgomery opts for the adjective *mukhlid*

And in a poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit the abodes are again not qualified, although the writing is upon threadbare parchment:

> You recognised the abodes of Zaynab in al-Kathīb, like lines of writing (*ka-khaṭṭi al-waḥy*) upon threadbare parchment.[9]

Similarly, the word *waḥy* is used by ʿAntara b. Shaddād to highlight the ruined nature of an abode, which is compared to writing that is old and unintelligible:

> Oh! Abode of ʿAbla at the Stone Well, like intricate tattooing on the ankle of the bride,
> Like the writing (*ka-l-waḥy*) on pages from the era of Kisrā which he gave to one whose speech is barbarous, unintelligible.[10]

These are all of the instances of the substantive *waḥy* which I have been able to locate in pre-Islamic poetry. There is a poem attributed to Imruʾ al-Qays which includes the term *waḥy*, although this is not included here because it is clearly a later forgery.[11]

'perdurable' as qualifying the 'inscription' (*waḥy*) and therefore the 'inscription' is permanent. He notes, however, that the adjective might equally qualify the rock (*ḥajar*), as I have translated above. The preference should be given to the latter translation because it is the 'inscription' or 'writing' which evokes the state of decay and it is the rock, in contrast, which endures. See Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 285.

[9] *ʿArafta diyāra Zaynaba bi-l-Kathībi / ka-khaṭṭi ʿl-waḥyi fī ʿl-raqqi ʿl-qashībi*. See Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit*, ed. Walīd 'Arafāt (London: Luzac, 1971), 82; translation (amended) from Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 289.

[10] *A-lā yā dāra ʿAblata bi-l-ṭawiyyi / ka-rajʿi ʿl-washmi fī rusghi ʿl-hadiyyi // ka-waḥyi ṣaḥāʾifin min ʿahdi Kisrā / fa-ahdāhā li-aʿjama ṭimṭimiyyī*. See Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 31; Translation from Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment', 298, 307.

[11] The substantive *waḥy* in this poem fails to make any sense if it is read in its pre-Islamic sense. The line is as follows: 'A gallant man conquered the farthest places *waḥyan* / And he sent to its East groups of horses' (*Humāmun ṭaḥṭaḥa ʿl-āfāqa waḥyan / wa-sāqa ilā mashāriqihā ʿl-raʿālā*). The line and poem are problematic for several reasons. The first is that the poem is only a fragment of five lines in the collection of Imruʿ al-Qays' work compiled by al-Shantamarī (d. 1083), which formed the basis of Wilhelm Ahlwardt's edition of 'The divans of the six ancient Arabic poets' (1870) and the newly indexed and edited edition by Albert Azazi (1999). However, in the edition by the Egyptian scholar Ḥasan al-Sandūbī (1930), the fragment has two additional lines interspersed between verses 2-3 and 4-5 and in the edition of Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (1958), three lines from the fragment—which do not include the line above— appear within a longer poem of 21 lines. There are also textual variations between the common verses, such as *alam ukhbirka* (Sandūbī) / *alam yukhbirka* (Ahlwardt) / *alam yaḥjunki* (Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm). The fragments include nomenclature which is uncommon in pre-Islamic poetry, such as *dhū riyāsh* / *dhū nuwās*, which are referring to various kings of Yemen. In the longer recension of Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, which is surely a later invention with perhaps some original verses, *al-qayna*, a singing slave girl is attested, which is again rare in pre-Islamic poetry. It is likely

All of the verses recounted above occur in the *nasīb*, which is an introductory section of the *qaṣīda*, and form part of the *aṭlāl* motif wherein the poet laments the state of a ruined encampment where he had formerly spent time in the company of his friends and his beloved. In discussing the *aṭlāl* motif, Suzanne Stetkevych has observed that the rock inscriptions and other kinds of writing detailed in the *aṭlāl*, which need to be read by the poet but cannot, are evoked to illustrate 'the permanence of nature and the impermanence of culture, and thus ultimately, nature's immortality and man's mortality'.[12] Following this observation, Neuwirth concludes that the term *waḥy*, 'remains mute' and is a '*waḥy* of loss' and that in the poet's eyes, the 'writings' do not represent a valid sign system, but an empty signifier.[13] It is indeed clear that the similes are illustrating that the poet cannot read the messages, but this does not mean that the word *waḥy* is an 'empty signifier' as Neuwirth suggests. Rather than simply representing an empty signifier to the poet, it is more likely highlighting the fact that this is a writing which once had meaning but which the poet cannot decipher now.[14] With the passing of time the writing has become inaccessible, and so the *original* meaning of the message is lost or has at least become hard to interpret due to its ruinous state. Returning to the theme wherein the poet has stopped to ponder over the ruins, this is exactly the point the poet is attempting to highlight: the ruins had meaning to the poet in a bygone time, but now that he has returned, he can no longer reach those meanings, even though a trace

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that part, or all of the poem, is post-Islamic. The case is all the more compelling if we read the term *waḥy* in its Qur'anic sense (see further in this chapter) or perhaps more properly, its post-Qur'anic sense. We can then render the verse as follows: 'A gallant man conquered the farthest places because of divine communication (*waḥyan*)'. Finally, it is also noteworthy that in the poems quoted above, the term *waḥy* appears within the *nasīb* section of the poem (see the next section of main text above). Conversely, this appears somewhat roughly in the middle of the poem and thus breaks the conventions described above. I owe several of these observations to Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila. See, W. Ahlwardt, ed., *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets: Ennabiga, Antara, Tharafa, Zuhair, Alqama and Imruulqais; Chiefly According to the MSS. of Paris, Gotha, and Leyden; and the Collection of Their Fragments with a List of the Various Readings of the Text.* (London: Trübner, 1870), 3–4, 204; Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 123; Imruʾ al-Qays, *Sharḥ dīwān Imriʾ al-Qays*, ed. Ḥasan Sandūbī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1939), 214; Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān Imriʾ al-Qays*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1958), 308–10.

[12] Suzanne Pinckney. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*, Myth and Poetics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 21–22.

[13] Neuwirth, 'Discovery of Writing', 74, 75.

[14] In an earlier work to the reference above and in contrast to it, Neuwirth alludes to the idea of original meaning when she states that the writing carries a 'meaningful message' (*sinnvolle Botschaft*). See, *Frühmekkanische Suren*, 1:653.

remains. The poet is an outsider to what was his home; only a sign of it is left on the sand, which he cannot understand. Such is the writing, which has also been ravaged by time. He is an outsider to this too, once understood, but now impenetrable.

It is also worth mentioning that the word *waḥy* need not necessarily be understood in such a technical sense as literally referring to 'writing'—even an impenetrable one at that—but it is possible that it is referring to something less technical so to speak, that is, in a more general sense, to a 'message'.[15] The examples of the word *waḥy* in several of the poems might equally be translated in this sense.[16] What is important to note, however, is that the substantive *waḥy* it is not referring to an ordinary 'message' or 'writing', but to one that the poet is unable to decipher, although it has or had meaning.

2.1.2 The form IV verb *awḥā* and its verbal noun *īḥāʾ*

In rare instances there are verbal forms of the root *w-ḥ-y* in pre-Islamic poetry. Toshiko Izutsu was the first to bring to light a verse by ʿAlqama al-Faḥl, which includes an example of the form IV verb *awḥā*:[17]

> He communicated (*yūḥī*) to her, with clacking sounds like the incomprehensible talking of the Byzantines (*al-Rūm*) in their castles.[18]

The verse describes the communication between two ostriches which is likened to the foreign language of the Byzantines. The message in this instance is not written, but oral and non-verbal. The poet is emphasising that he does not know the content of the conversation; indeed, that it is only known to the ostriches, the same as when a foreign language is heard and not understood by those who cannot speak it. In

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[15] To this point I am indebted to Robert Hoyland who suggested I consider this translation after I presented a paper covering some of the material in this chapter at the British Association for Islamic Studies annual conference held at the University of Exeter in 2018. Madigan also suggests this possibility in passing in a footnote, see Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 16 fn. 14.

[16] Similarly, this also holds true for the other terms detailed at the outset of this section which are hardly technical words for writing either: both the root *kh-ṭ-ṭ* and similarly *r-s-m* refer to making lines or marks, as opposed to specifically writing in a technical sense. See Edward William Lane, *Arabic - English Lexicon*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984), 759, 1084–85.

[17] Izutsu, *God and Man*, 158.

[18] *Yūḥī ilayhā bi-inqāḍin wa-naqnaqatin / ka-mā tarāṭanu fī afdāniha ʿl-Rūmu.* See Arazi and Muṣāliḥah, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, 27.

another verse, the verb *awḥā* is used to describe the communication between eagles in Abū Dhuʾayb's poetry. Admittedly he is a *mukhaḍram* poet—that is, a poet who lived both during pre-Islamic and Islamic times—and the poem is likely a post-Islamic example of his work given the poem's general theme, but it remains instructive none the less:

> And he said to him and indeed she communicated to him (*awḥat ilayhi*), 'Bless you' – Why do you loathe [her in flight]?[19]

Here the poet knows what was said between the eagles, which he needs to relay for the sake of his story, but wishes to emphasise that the type of communication is unusual by employing the verb *awḥā*. Perhaps he is reminding the audience that the communication is merely a sound to the human observer, but meaningful for the birds.

The poet Imruʾ al-Qays employs the verbal noun of the form IV stem *īḥāʾ*:

> Starved hunting dogs, their eyes like the blossom of the red tree (*ʾiḍras*), from being held back and the anticipation of the communication (*al-īḥāʾ*) [to go].[20]

Al-Qays is painting the picture that the hunting dogs are becoming increasingly agitated by the prospect of the hunt and are waiting for 'the communication' (*al-īḥāʾ*), although one might equally translate this as the 'message' or 'signal', to be set. The instruction which they are waiting for, and which is causing great anticipation, could be verbal or gestural, although the latter is more likely, and may well only be comprehensible to the hunter and the dog.

2.1.3 The relationship between form I *waḥy* and form IV *awḥā*

It remains to discuss what is the relationship between the form I *waḥy*, which occurs only as the verbal noun, and the form IV *awḥā* which occurs both in the verbal form and its verbal noun (*īḥāʾ*). For Izutsu the relationship between the two types is one of mysteriousness. As he understood *waḥy* to refer specifically to writing, he stated

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[19] *Fa-qāla la-hu wa-qad awḥat ilayhi / a-lā li-llāhi ummuka mā taʿīfu*. See Abū Dhuʾayb al-Hudhalī, *Der Diwan des Abī Dhuʾaib*, ed. Joseph Hell (Hannover: Orient-Buchhandlung Heinz Lafaire, 1926), Poem 23, v. 10.

[20] *Mugharrathatan zurqan ka-anna ʿuyūnaha / mina ʿl-dhamri wa-l-īḥāʾi nuwwāru ʿiḍrasi*. See al-Qays, *Dīwān Imruʾ al-Qays*, 104.

that just as an unknown language is mysterious to the one who hears it, so was the practice of writing in ancient Arabia.[21] Aside the point that *waḥy* is not necessarily referring to writing *per se*, recent work has brought into question the low level of literacy in pre-Islamic Arabia by highlighting that literacy was more prevalent than previously thought.[22] Additionally, the Qur'an also speaks about the writing of contracts (Q 2:282-83) and so it is quite obvious that writing was not so scarce or mysterious as previously thought.[23] Izutzu is on the right track, although rather than mysteriousness, it is unintelligibility that unites the forms. The poet cannot make sense of the message as one cannot comprehend a foreign language, communication between animals or dilapidated rock inscriptions. There remains another important semantic element though, namely, that there is original meaning in the communications—whether that is before the message was ravaged by time as in the nominal form I usage, or to the direct recipients of the communication, as in the form IV usage.

2.2 The root *w-ḥ-y* in the Qur'an

I will now discuss how the root *w-ḥ-y* is used in the Qur'an and whether its Qur'anic meaning is continuous or discontinuous with its pre-Islamic meaning. The root *w-ḥ-y* occurs 78 times in the Qur'an: six times as the verbal noun *waḥy* and 72 times as the form IV verb *awḥā*.[24] In rare instances, the root *w-ḥ-y* has a profane application of the like described in pre-Islamic poetry. More often, it is signifying a particularly important type of communication—the communication between God and His messengers. As will be show, the semantics of the pre-Islamic *waḥy*/*awḥā* continue

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[21] Izutsu, *God and Man*, 160–61.

[22] See Peter Stein, 'Literacy in Pre-Islamic Arabia: An Analysis of the Epigraphic Evidence', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 255–80; M. Maraqten, 'Writing materials in pre-Islamic Arabia', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 43, no. 2 (1998): 287–310; F. Krenkow, 'The Use of Writing for the Preservation of Ancient Arabic Poetry', in *A volume of Oriental studies presented to E.G. Browne on his 60th birthday*, ed. Sir Thomas W. Arnold and Reynold Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 261–68. On the high level of material culture in pre-Islamic Arabia, see Ute Franke and Joachim Gierlichs, *Roads of Arabia: the archeological treasures of Saudi Arabia* (Berlin: Museum of Islamic Art, Pergamon Museum, 2012).

[23] On the issue of writing and the Qur'anic Messenger's contemporaries, see Khalil ʿAthamina, '"Al-Nabiyy al-Ummiyy": An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Qurʾanic Verse', *Der Islam* 69 (1992): 61–80.

[24] For the verbal noun, see Q 11:37; 20:114; 21:45; 23:27; 42:51; 53:4. These verses are discussed in detail in section 2.2.

to be evident in its application in the Qur'an, albeit considerably realigned. Here, the unintelligibility of the communication is no longer due to cultural boundaries or the passage of time, but rather it is now only God's elect—his messengers and those who he has chosen to communicate with—who can understand the message. The messenger is like an interpreter of a foreign language, only in this instance, the form of communication is exclusively understood by God and His elect.

2.2.1 The verb *awḥā* as divine communication

The verb *awḥā* can be understood to indicate a divine activity in the Qur'an because the primary agent is God. Of the 46 active verbal instances of *awḥā*, 42 are predicated of God.[25] As with the root *n-z-l* there are multiple instances of the passive form, where the implied agent is God. Specifically, there are 26 instances which include the 3rd person masculine singular passive form (*ūḥiya*). Occasionally in these verses the divine provenance of what was communicated is expressed by the prepositional phrase 'from your Lord' (*min rabbika*, Q 6:106) emphasising that God is the implied agent. The passive verbs are often linked by the relative pronouns *mā* and occasionally *alladhī* to various imperative verbs. In Q 33:2, God instructs the Messenger to follow what was communicated to him (*wa-ttabiʿ mā yūḥā ilayka min rabbika*). They can be part of an imperative *qul* ('say') statement where the divine speaker is instructing the addressee to speak, such as Q 6:145, 'Say (*qul*): 'I do not find, in what is communicated to me (*ūḥiya ilayya*)…'. While these verses do not directly state the divine provenance of the communication because it is possible that God is instructing the Messenger to 'follow' or to 'say' what has been communicated by someone else, the most likely scenario remains that God is instructing the Messenger to 'follow' or 'say' what *He* has communicated. God is, therefore, the agent or implied agent in 68 of the 72 verbal instances. The remaining four instances where God is not the agent are dealt with at the end of this section.

There is one instance where an angelic messenger (*rasūl*) is the agent of the verb *awḥā* but this is explicitly by God's permission, as detailed in Q 42:51, 'He should send a messenger (*rasūl*) and he communicates (*yūḥiya*), by His leave,

[25] In the following forms: once in the 1st person singular (Q 5:111), 10 times in the 3rd person masculine singular and 31 times in the 1st person plural.

whatsoever He wills'.[26] The noun *rasūl* is often used to refer to those God has sent to nations to guide them, i.e., apostles, but it seems extremely probable that here it refers to an angelic messenger.[27] Angels are designated as *mursalūn* in Q 51:31 and in Q 29:33-4 the noun *rusul* refers to angelic messengers, as discussed in chapter 1. Given the content of Q 42:51 (which is discussed extensively in section 2.2.3), where the methods by which God communicates to man are elucidated, it is probable that the one who delivers the communication is a messenger angel. This is an example of a divine activity of the type already discussed where God is communicating to man, only here via an intermediary.

When God is the agent or implied agent, the divine activity is concerned with a type of communication between God and his creation. The earth will report its secrets because God communicated to it (*awḥā lahā*) to do so (Q 99:5); He communicated to the seven heavens their command (*awḥā fī kulli samāʾin amrahā*, Q 41:12); and to the bees to take houses in the mountains, trees or from what they construct (Q 16.68). In the main, it is how God communicates to his prophets: some 71 out of the 80 grammatical patients of the verb *awḥā* are prophets. The Qur'anic Messenger is the patient of the verb *awḥā* on 37 occasions, followed by Moses on eight occasions.[28] Q 4:163 includes three instances of the verb *awḥā* and details a collective, although not an exhaustive, list of the prophets that God communicated to through *waḥy*: Aaron, Abraham, David, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Noah and 'the prophets' (*al-nabiyyūn*) after him and Solomon. One additional recipient in this list stands out: the tribes (*al-asbāṭ*). The term *al-asbāṭ* occurs four times in the Qur'an and it is generally accepted in later Islamic tradition and Western scholarship that it is a proper noun for the Twelve Tribes of Israel.[29] However, if the term does mean this already in the Qur'an, it would seem odd given that all the other patients of the verb *awḥā* in the verse are prophets. In the remaining three instances, the term is not connected to the verb *awḥā*, but it does occur within lists of previous

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[26] The grammatical agents are added here for clarity: 'He [God] should send a messenger (*rasūl*) and he [the angelic messenger] communicates (*yūḥiya*), by His [God's] leave, whatsoever He [God] wills.'

[27] For an investigation into the Qur'anic usages of *rasūl* and *nabī* see W. A. Bijlefeld, 'A prophet and more than a prophet? Some observations on the Qurʾanic use of the terms "prophet" and "apostle"', *The Muslim World* 59, no. 1 (1969): 1–28.

[28] For Moses, see Q 7:117, 160; 10:87; 20:13, 48, 77; 26:52, 63.

[29] See See Arne Amadeus Ambros, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 127 and 307; *EQ*, s.v. 'Tribes and Clans' (Landau-Tasseron)

prophets and in verses which are concerned with showing the continuity of the Messenger's revelation with those of earlier prophets.[30] It might be best to understand the term *al-asbāṭ* as vaguely referring to the long list of minor Old Testament prophets who are not found in the Qur'an or even other unknown prophets. The term would then fit somewhat more neatly amongst the prophets that surround it in the verses it occurs in.

Other individual instances of prophets who are patients of the verb *awḥā* are Aaron (Q 10:37 and 20:48), Joseph (Q 12:15), Noah (Q 11:36 and 23:27),[31] Isaac and Jacob (Q 21:72), as are messengers (sg. *rasūl,* pl. *rusul*, Q 14:13, 21:25) and 'those before you' (*alladhīna min qablika*, Q 39:65, 42:3). The last phrase refers indirectly to earlier prophets because the verses are concerned with showing the continuity of the Qur'anic message with earlier revelations, as in Q 39:65, 'It has been communication to thee and to those before thee (*ūḥiya ilayka wa-lladhīna min qablika*)…' Similarly, in two verses it is stated that God has only sent 'men' (*rijāl*, Q 16:43, 21:7) to whom He has communicated (*nūḥī*) emphasising that messengers need not be more than human. The connection between prophets and God communicating to them through *waḥy* is underlined in Q 6:93 where the verb *awḥā* is specifically employed to describe how one might seek to feign prophecy, 'And who does greater evil than he who forges against God a lie, or says, "To me it has been communicated", (*ūḥiya ilayya*) when naught has been communicated to him (*lam yūḥa ilayhi shayʾun*)…'.

As a corollary to this and albeit somewhat infrequently, God communicates to the angels (*al-malāʾika*) and other, likely, non-prophets through *waḥy*, but seemingly only to aid prophets. In Q 8:12, God communicates (*yūḥī*) to the angels when they come to the aid of the Messenger and the Meccans during a battle, possibly at Badr. In Q 5:111, it is communicated (*awḥā*) to the disciples of Jesus (*al-ḥawāriyyīn*) to believe in God and His messenger Jesus.[32] The divine favour bestowed upon Moses via his mother is shown when God communicated to her in Q 20:37-38, 'Already another time We favoured thee [Moses], When We

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[30] See Q 2:136, 140; 3:84.
[31] See also Q 23:27 which includes the verbal noun *waḥy*.
[32] For this word as referring to Jesus' disciples, see also Q 3:52, 5:112 and 61:14. On the meaning of this word, see *EQ*, s.v. 'Apostle' (Zahniser); *EI*^{2} , s.v. 'Ḥawārī' (Wensinck); Jeffery, *Foreign vocabulary*, 115–16.

communicated (*awḥaynā*) unto thy mother what was communicated (*mā yūḥā*).'[33] While it is possible that both Jesus's disciples and Mary are considered prophets in the Qur'an on account of their receiving *waḥy* in these verses, it is more likely that God communicates through *waḥy* to non-prophets in exceptional circumstance to aid the prophet. Receiving a communication from God through *waḥy* does not, necessarily, make one a prophet by default, although in the main, it does illustrate the way that God communicates with His chosen messengers.

The act of *waḥy* is not solely a divine activity in the Qur'an as there are two other agents of the verb *awḥā* in the Qur'an. The agents are the prophet Zechariah (Q 19:11) and the devils (*al-shayāṭīn*, Q 6:112, 121). All three of these verses conform closely to the pre-Islamic usage of the verbal form IV *awḥā*. The case is so for Zechariah in Q 19:10-11 which details that after he was struck dumb by God, he signaled a command to his people, 'So he came forth unto his people from the prayer room, then he communicated to them (*awḥā ilayhim*) to glorify God in the morning and evening.' This is reminiscent of the verses of Imruʾ al-Qays where the hunter communicates—possibly by gestures—to the hunting dogs. Similarly, when the devils communicate to their friends (*la-yūḥūna ilā awliyāʾihim*, Q 6:121) and each other (*yūḥī baʿḍuhum ilā baʿḍin*, Q 6:112) this is surely indicating a non-standard speech practice of the pre-Islamic type; in other verses the devils' communication is described as 'whispering' (*waswasa*), which implies a communication which is impenetrable to the outside observer.[34] It may even be non-audible because the devils are said to whisper into the breasts of mankind (*yuwaswisu fī sudūri 'l-nāsi*, Q 114:4).

The devils as agents of the verb *awḥā* might be accounted for by the fact that this form of communication closely conforms to the type of communication which the pre-Islamic *awḥā* describes. At the same time, what is particularly striking is that the same term which is used for God communicating with his messengers and thus indicative of a divine communication, is also employed regarding its antithesis: a form of communication which originates from a satanic source.

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[33] And similarly, in another version of the story told in Q 28:7.
[34] See Q 7:20; 114:5-6.

2.2.2 The word *waḥy* as a verbal noun

The word *waḥy* is seldom understood as denoting a process, but more often the outcome of that process, i.e., the message itself. In other words, it is understood as a substantive for the Qur'anic revelations as a whole.[35] The tendency to read the word *waḥy*, as well as other nouns that denote the revelation itself, as devoid of their verbal power is, as Madigan has rightly pointed out, 'risking the loss of their relational and dynamic sense implicit in their being verbal nouns'.[36] The case is so with the verses which include the word *waḥy*, which as will be shown, are concerned with emphasising the process of divine communication as opposed to its output.

The word *waḥy*, which is properly the verbal noun (*maṣdar*) of the basic form I,[37] appears in the Qur'an six times: with a possessive pronoun on three occasions, twice as an indefinite noun and once with the definite article. Two instances of the word *waḥy* with the first plural possessive suffix *-nā* occur within narratives of Noah where he is commanded to build a ship with or by way of God's *waḥy*. In Q 23:27 it states, 'Then We communicated to him, "Make the Ark under our eyes and according to our communication (*awḥaynā ilayhi ani 'ṣnaʿi 'l-fulka bi-aʿyuninā wa-waḥyinā*)…" and similarly in Q 11:36-37, 'And it was communicated to Noah that (*ūhiya ilā Nūḥin annahu*) "None of thy people shall believe but he who has already believed; so be thou not distressed by what they may be doing, and make the Ark under our eyes and according to our communication (*bi-aʿyuninā wa-waḥyinā*)"'. On both occasions the preposition *bi-*, which is prefixed to the word *waḥy*, indicates the instrument that aids the action of the verb.[38] More usually this is translated as 'under'[39]—which is little doubt used to express a notion of guidance or

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[35] For example, see Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 209 (ii/1); Wild, *Self-referentiality in the Qur'ān*, 10. This is undoubtedly derived from the traditional understanding of *waḥy* as a noun for the revelation. On the traditional reading, see *EQ*, s.v. 'Names of the Qurʾān' (Mir). Neuwirth in *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 2010 is careful to warn of the problems with equating *waḥy* with the revelation as a whole (pp. 130) but also states that the word *waḥy* represents 'the enunciator's successful decoded communication from God to the people' (see pp. 715-16). As will be shown, she is certainly correct in emphasising the esoteric nature of the revelatory message, but it is doubtful that the word *waḥy* should be understood as the output of the communication process.

[36] Madigan, 'Qurʾān self-referentiality', 61.

[37] There is no instance of the form I verb in the Qur'an.

[38] See Wright, *Grammar*, II: 160-61, 164. Traditionally this is referred to as *bāʾ al-istiʿāna*. See also Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī, *Mughnī al-labīb ʿan kutub al-aʿārīb*, vol. 1 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1964), 108.

[39] See for example Arberry's translation and Abdel Haleem, *The Qurʾan*, 216.

help—but it is helpful to note that it is specifically linked to the verb, in this case the imperative form *iṣnaʿ* 'build, make, construct'. Noah's building of the Ark is made possible by God's *waḥy* on two levels: firstly, the instruction is communicated by God to Noah (*awḥaynā*) and secondly it is through *waḥy* itself that God aids its construction. A similar scenario is depicted regarding the Messenger's task of warning. In Q 21:45 the preposition *bi-* is the signifying the reason why the warning is performed, which is specifically due to *waḥy*, 'Say: "I warn you only according to the communication (*qul innamā undhirukum bi-l-waḥy*)"'.[40] In Q 53:4 the process by which the revelations are communicated to the Messenger is described, 'It is naught but a divine communication communicated (*in huwa illā waḥyun yūḥā*)'. The pronoun *huwa* is indeed a self-referential term whereby the Qur'an refers to itself, but whether it refers to the revelation in a wider sense or more narrowly to the speech described in the previous verse, Q 53:2 'Nor he speaks out of caprice', is unclear. While the revelations are undoubtedly qualified as a *waḥy* in this verse, the emphasis remains on the process by which 'it' (*huwa*) was communicated with the phrase *waḥyun yūḥā*. The point is to make clear the particular modality by which the revelations are communicated. Similarly, the processual element of the word *waḥy* is evident in Q 20:114, when the Messenger is instructed 'And hasten not with the recitation (*al-qurʾān*) ere its communication (*waḥyuhu*) is accomplished unto thee'. This is unlikely to refer to the Qur'an as a whole but rather to the ongoing instances of divine communication that the Messenger is receiving. Finally, in the aforementioned Q 42:51 which outlines the modes in which God communicates to mankind, the word *waḥy* appears as one of these specific modes, 'It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him (*yukallimahu*), except by communication (*waḥyan*)…'.

The word *waḥy*, therefore, is not being used to refer to the revelation itself as a proper noun but as a verbal noun which is denoting the process by which the revelations were communicated. Neuwirth is right to highlight that the Qur'anic usage represents an inversion of the pre-Islamic *waḥy* where in the poetic *aṭlāl* motif it evokes a feeling of aporia when it is compared to the ruined encampments, whereas in the Qur'an it expresses the most elevated form of communication: divine

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[40] Wright amalgamates this use, which is traditionally understood as *bāʾ al-taʾlīm* 'to express the reason or cause', with that of the instrumental *bāʾ al-istiʿāna*. Both usages, however, are closely related. See Wright, *Grammar*, II: 160-61.

revelation.[41] However, as has been discussed here, it is unlikely that the word *waḥy* represents the outcome of that process (i.e., the revelation itself) but rather the ongoing process of that communication.

The root *w-ḥ-y* in the Qur'an signifies—in the main—a divine communication process, whether it is used verbally or as a verbal noun. It describes the communication process between God and his creation and most often denotes the communication process between God and his prophets on earth. On three rare occasions, a non-divine application of the verb *awḥā* is found, which is largely in line with its pre-Islamic usage. Is it possible, then, that like the apparent profane applications of the verb *awḥā* in the Qur'an, its pre-Islamic semantics are also carried over when it has a divine setting? It is to this question that I shall now turn, by defining the divine communication process.

2.2.3 Defining the divine communication process

Thus far the root *w–ḥ–y* has been described as signifying a communication process, usually between God and His creation, and more particularly, between God and His messengers. Does the Qur'an tell us anything about this process and is it possible to define the process further? The most explicit description of the communication process of *waḥy* occurs in Q 42:51, which outlines how God communicates to man:

> It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him (*yukallimahu*), except by (a) communication (*waḥyan*), or (b) from behind a screen (*ḥijāb*), or (c) that He should send a messenger (*rasūlan*) and he communicates by His leave (*fa-yūḥiya bi-idhnihi*) whatsoever He wills; surely He is All-high, All-wise.

The main feature of the verse is that all three modes of communication are exceptions to the rule that God does not speak to men through an ordinary speech behaviour, indicated by the verb *kallama* 'to speak, address', and so all are mediations of the divine communication. Madigan argues that the verb *kallama* implies a direct address and so the exceptions are to establish a contrast between God's direct speech and the way God addresses human beings.[42] However, the exceptions are not necessarily highlighting the difference between direct and indirect speech. The contrast between the verb *kallama* and mode (a) *waḥy* may rather be due to the type of speech and so one must allow the possibility, as highlighted by John Wansbrough,

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[41] Neuwirth, 'Discovery of Writing', 81–82.
[42] Madigan, *The Qur'ān's self-image*, 142.

that the term *waḥy* may indicate a direct address between God and man.[43] It is clear that in the sentence the noun is a grammatical exception to the verb *kallama* and so it cannot be to 'utter directly', as Wansbrough puts it, which implies a normal speech behaviour.[44] Here the semantic overtones of the pre-Islamic usage of the term are important to gain a clearer understanding of *waḥy* when contrasted with *kallama*. As has been shown, the term *waḥy* is employed in pre-Islamic poetry to describe a type of message that is meaningful for the one who receives it and can understand its symbols, while it remains impenetrable to the outsider. This is surely pertinent in this verse: it is only the prophets, or those God has chosen to communicate with, who can understand this type of communication. This is in contrast to *kallama* which is representative of a universal form of communication.

Another distinction might be found in the apparent non-verbal character of the Qur'anic *waḥy*, although whether this is actually the case is far from certain. First, the pre-Islamic material speaks to both verbal and non-verbal possibilities. The verb *awḥā* indicates a non-verbal but aural communication between animals in two poems, while the example of the hunter and the hunting dog could refer to either, although a non-verbal signal is more likely. The most prevalent form in pre-Islamic poetry, the nominal *waḥy*, however, refers to a message—a message which is of a verbal form, i.e., writing or inscriptions. It is, however, certainly not oral. In the Qur'an, the non-verbal usage is represented by the case where Zechariah communicates (*awḥā*) by gestures to his people in Q 19:11—in a latter retelling of the story it is notable that the verb *awḥā* has been replaced by *ramz* 'signs' making this meaning explicit (Q 3:41).[45] Similarly the communication might be viewed as non-verbal when God communicates to non-humans such as the bees (Q 16:68), the earth (Q 99:5) or the sky (Q 41:12). Despite this, it does not necessarily follow that this should be extended to include all Qur'anic instances: Q 42:51 speaks somewhat

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[43] Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 1977, 34. Izutsu admits that the *waḥyan* mode is a direct form of communication but erroneously equates this with when God spoke directly to Moses (e.g., Q 4:162), see *God and Man*, 176. This cannot be the case given that the verse details exceptions to speech through *kallama*.

[44] Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 1977, 34.

[45] The word *ramz*, is a hapax legomenon in the Qur'an. The root *r-m-z* is cognate with Syriac, see Zammit, *Qurʾānic Arabic*, 201. In the Peshitta's version of the original setting of the story—Luke 1:1-21—the root *r-m-z* is employed to translate the Greek *dianeuo,* 'to express one's meaning by a sign, nod to, beckon to, wink at'. See Joseph Thaler and William Smith, 'Greek Lexicon Entry for Dianeuo', Bible Study Tools, accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/dianeuo.html.

against this as *waḥy* is presented as an exception to normal speech (*kallama*) and so it none the less remains a type of speech. What is important to note and what is clear from the pre-Islamic usage is that *waḥy* is a mode of communication—whether verbal or non-verbal—that is only meaningful to the one who understands its symbols. It is this which marks the distinction between *waḥy* and *kallama* in Q 42:51. Although Neuwirth has recently concluded that *waḥy* is representative of a non-verbal communication, in part based upon Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's analysis of *waḥy* as a 'coded non-verbal language', the verbal vs. non-verbal question must to a certain extent be left open as it is equally possible that the form could be a specially coded verbal language.[46]

There remain two other possible types of communication between God and man detailed in the verse. Mode (c) where an angelic messenger is sent who 'communicates by His leave' (*fa-yūḥiya bi-idnihi*) is clearly contrasted with *kallama* because an intermediary is present. This distinguishes it from mode (a) *waḥy* which, as just discussed, is a direct address between God and the recipient, although the angelic messenger also communicates through *waḥy*.

Mode (b) which is when God communicates from behind a screen (*ḥijāb*), however, takes some further explanation. Jeffery interpreted mode (b) as a direct encounter between God and a prophet where he understood *ḥijāb* to correspond with the *wilon* and the *pargod* of the Rabbinic texts,[47] where accordingly it represents the cosmic veil, which is the lowest form of the seven firmaments.[48] Wansbrough took this further by suggesting that the phrase *min warāʾi ḥijābin* (*lit.* from behind a screen) is referring to the Rabbinic distinction between Israelite and foreign prophets because it is a locution of *me-aḥore ha-wilon* (from behind the veil) found in Gen. Rabba 52.5.[49] However, I would like to suggest an alternative reading. The term *ḥijāb* occurs in the Qur'an on eight occasions.[50] Its meaning is quite clear: it

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[46] See Neuwirth, 'Discovery of Writing', 81;and Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ: Dirāsa fī ʿulūm al-qurʾān* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1990), 35–65.
[47] Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān as Scripture, III', 200, fn. 34.
[48] See Andrei A. Orlov, *Divine scapegoats: demonic mimesis in early Jewish mysticism* (Albany: Suny Press, 2015), 44–48.
[49] Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 1977, 35. For the specific reference, see Rippin's annotated edition: *Quranic studies: sources and methods of scriptural interpretation*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Amherst: Prometheus, 2004), 267. This intertext was identified much earlier, see Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 52; Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Gräfenhainichen: Schulze, 1931), 420.
[50] Q 7:46; 17:45; 19:17; 33:53; 38:32; 41:5; 42:51. The passive participle form *maḥjūb* appears in Q 83:15.

represents a screen or barrier between two things. It can separate the righteous from the unbelievers (Q 7:46, 17:45, 41:5 and 83:15), it is how Mary separated herself from her family when she was delivering Jesus (Q 19:17), and it is used to separate the Messenger's wives from visitors to his house (Q 33:53). On one occasion, it is used metaphorically to indicate the sun turning to darkness (Q 38:32). The first application implies a physical separation of two groups and is probably not of direct relevance to this verse. The second and third applications are far more telling because they allude to a screen that averts a vision of either Mary or the Prophet's wives. The metaphorical instance is similar because it is the screen which hides the sunlight. In Q 33:53, the same phrase as Q 42:51, *min warāʾi ḥijāb* is used in relation to the Prophet's wives. Perhaps the *ḥijāb* in Q 42:51 is representing a screen which averts a direct vision of God. This need not be taken as analogous to the *wilon* or *pargod* of the Rabbinic literature where it refers to the lowest heaven. Now, admittedly, it is not detailed what form this screen might take. Jeffery argues that mode (b) refers to when God speaks (*kallama*) to Moses (Q 4:164 and 7:143). However, because in these verses the verb *kallama* is employed on multiple occasions, and emphatically in Q 4:164, where we are told that 'God spoke to Moses speaking (*wa-kallama 'llāhu Mūsā taklīman*),' it would seem at odds with the general rule of the Q 42:51, which is that all modes of communication are exceptions to ordinary speech, *kallama*. Moreover, immediately prior to Q 4:164 is the verse which includes a protracted list of prophets who received *waḥy* (Q 4:163) and therefore these verses are highlighting the contrast between the mode that God communicated with Moses, *kallama/taklīman*, and the usual methods of communication between God and his prophets.[51] In Q 2:253 it is detailed that God raised certain prophets higher than others through the act of addressing them via *kallama*, which further highlights the exceptional nature of this type of communication.[52] It is possible that it is representative of another type of divine encounter: when Moses encountered God at the burning bush, which is told several times in the Qur'an.[53] Here, the burning bush represents a screen (*ḥijāb*) between Moses and God which precludes Moses' having seen God directly thus conforming to mode (b) in Q 42:51.

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[51] This is, of course, not to say that Moses does not receive *waḥy*, as he does so on eight occasions.
[52] This verse reads, 'And those Messengers, some We have preferred above others; some there are to whom God spoke (*kallama 'llāhu*), and some He raised in rank…'.
[53] See Q 20:9-16; 28:29-35; 27:7-14; 79:16.

It is also interesting to note that in the longest and most elaborate telling of the burning bush story (Q 20:9-16), the verb *awḥā* is employed. In Q 20:13 the verb *awḥā* is used to describe the communication between Moses and God, 'I have chosen thee; therefore listen to what is communicated (*mā yūḥā*)'. The divine favour bestowed upon Moses in the burning tree visionary experience is then likened in Q 20:38 to an earlier case where God communicated to Moses' mother to cast him into the river, in which the verbal *awḥā* appears twice: 'When we communicated (*awḥaynā*) to your mother what was communicated (*mā yūḥā*)'. If the burning bush is an example of mode (b) this means that the modes outlined in Q 42:51 are not necessarily to be considered in isolation but might be employed in a single revelatory experience: God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, which represents the screen (*ḥijāb*) but He still communicated to him through *waḥy*.

The same observation can be made for the Messenger's visionary experiences detailed in Q 53:5-12, which also include the root *w-ḥ-y* and have been shown to correspond closely with Moses' visionary experience in Q 20:9-16.[54] In addition to the terminological and geographical similarities—e.g., both visions are said to have taken place near trees—Michael Sell has argued that it is the very occurrence of the root *w-ḥ-y* that further links the two encounters.[55] In the first visionary experience of the Messenger in Q 53:5-12 it is stated that the Messenger saw God on a distant horizon who then 'communicated to His servant what was communicated' (*fa-awḥā ilā ʿabdihi mā awḥā*)' recalling the diction in Q 20:13 and 38 which both include multiple instances of the root *w-ḥ-y*.[56] It is also noteworthy that the Messenger might not have beheld God by his eyes, but by his heart—possibly here representing the screen—when it is stated that in Q 53:11 that 'His heart lies not of what it saw (*mā raʾā*)'.[57] It is at least conceivable that both Moses' and the Messenger's visionary experiences might represent examples of mode (b).

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[54] See Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 2010, 653–57; Sinai, 'Sūrat al-Najm', 15–16.

[55] Michael A. Sells, 'The Casting: A Close Hearing of Sūra 20:1-79', in *Qurʾānic Studies Today*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Michael A. Sells (London: Routledge, 2016), 146–47.

[56] Traditionally the object of the vision is understood to be Gabriel. It is, however, more likely to refer to God. The Messenger is, after all, God's servant and not Gabriel's. As Richard Bell already pointed out, this infers that the subject of *awḥa* is also God. To read the object of the vision as Gabriel results in the subject of the possessive suffix and the verb which precedes it as different, which he maintains is surely an 'unnatural use of language'. See 'Muhammad's visions', *The Muslim World* 24, no. 2 (1934): 149–50, 54.

[57] This reading is, however, reliant upon the subject of the final verb being read as the heart as opposed to the Messenger himself.

One will note that Q 42:51 is not addressed directly to the Qur'anic Messenger, i.e., it does not explain the ways in which God communicates to him. Rather, the verse is concerned with how God communicates with man in a general sense. While tradition would state that God has communicated with the Messenger only through mode (c) which is via an angelic messenger, this cannot be gleaned from the text as this is the only instance in the Qur'an when an angelic messenger is specifically the agent of the verb *awḥā*. Although some 31 out of 46 active verbal instances of the verb *awḥā* are formed in the first-person plural, there is little reason to understand this as referring to the speech of God and the angels, as it is more likely simply representing the divine speaker.[58] In all cases when the Messenger receives a divine communication it would appear to be an example of mode (a) when God is communicating directly. This might be accompanied by a visionary experience, as in Q 53 just discussed. Despite there being no example of an angelic messenger communicating to the Messenger in the Qur'an through *waḥy*, angelic messengers are involved in bringing down the revelation upon the Messenger's heart (Q 2:97 and 26:193-4) and angels are said to descend (*tanazzalu*) when the celestial archetype was sent down by God (Q 97:4). It is not inconceivable that the Messenger therefore also received revelation through this mode, involved as the angelic messengers are with revelatory events. It is also possible to read Q 42:51 as a description of the way in which the Messenger might have been receiving his revelations; in other words, it codifies his revelatory experience. This is further evident in the verse immediately following that appears to affirm that he receives revelation through these modalities, Q 42:52: 'And thus We have communicated to thee a Spirit of Our bidding (*wa-kadhālika awḥaynā ilayka rūḥan min amrinā*)'.[59]

The primary point of concern here is that the Qur'anic *waḥy*—that is, both in its verbal and verbal noun forms—incorporates important pre-Islamic semantic elements, i.e., the esoteric nature of the communication, only now it is used to signify God's divine communication to His messengers. In the Qur'an, this is a special type of coded message, which might equally be verbal or non-verbal, and is only decipherable by His chosen elect. This exceptional communication figures in two out of the three modes outlined in Q 42:51, while it may even figure in all modes if

[58] On this issue see Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 225–30.
[59] The direct object in this verse, 'spirit' (*rūḥ*), is discussed at the end of section 2.2.4.

element (b) represents Moses' visionary experience as well as the Messenger's—both of which also include God communicating to them through *waḥy*.

2.2.4 The content of the divine communication

It has now been established that God communicates to His messengers through *waḥy*. But what exactly is communicated? To identify this the objects related to the verb *awḥā* are now discussed. As already mentioned, it is the Qur'anic Messenger that is the most prevalent patient of the verb *awḥa* accounting for some 37 instances. From these verses it is possible to conclude that both the descriptive element of the revelation—that is, the narrative portions—as well as the prescriptive, by which I mean when the Messenger receives instructions, are communicated through *waḥy*.

Beginning with the descriptive elements, the most common direct object of the verb *awḥā* is *qurʾān*, which occurs in three forms: the definite *al-qurʾān* (Q 12:3); the definite preceded by a demonstrative pronoun *hādhā al-qurʾān* (Q 6:19); and the indefinite qualified by an adjective *qurʾān ʿarabīy* (Q 42:7). As already discussed in chapter 1, the 'recitation' represents the early manifestation of the celestial archetype and therefore it is fitting that it is this that is communicated to the Messenger. That the recitation is in Arabic is detailed in several other verses, although this should not be construed to mean that the communication itself is necessarily in Arabic.[60] Rather, God communicated to the Messenger through a coded verbal or non-verbal language, *waḥy*, which became an 'Arabic recitation'.

At other times, specific sections of the revelation are defined as having been communicated to the Messenger via *waḥy* when the verb *awḥā* forms part of a relative sentence.[61] In the aforementioned Q 12:3, it is the 'best of stories' which has been communicated, which likely refers to the story of Joseph that follows the verse, 'We will relate to thee the best of stories in that We have communicated to thee [of] this recitation (*naḥnu naquṣṣu ʿalayka aḥsana ʻl-qaṣaṣi bi-mā awḥaynā ilayka hādhā ʻl-qurʿāna*)'. Other verses which detail that specific parts of the revelation have been communicated to the Messenger are found when the verb *awḥā* has an accusative suffix referring to something earlier in the sentence or where there is a

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[60] For secondary references relating to the issue of the recitation being in Arabic, see chapter 2 footnote 77.

[61] *Awḥā* forms a part of a relative sentence on 20 occasions via the relative pronouns *mā* and *alladhī*. For *mā* see: 6:50, 106, 145; 7:203; 10:15, 109; 11:12; 12:3; 17:39; 18:27; 29:45; 33:2; 34:50; 46:9. For *alladhī* see: 13:30; 17:73, 86; 35:31; 42:13; 43:43.

demonstrative pronoun referring to verses which precede the instance of *awḥā*. In Q 3:44 and Q 12:102 is the phrase, 'That is of the tidings of the Unseen, that We communicate to thee (*dhālika min anbāʾi al-ghaybi nūḥīhi ilayka*)' where the accusative suffix *-hi* refers to *dhālika*, which in turn refers to the previous verses: the former includes the story of Zechariah and the birth of John the Baptist and the latter the story of Joseph. A similar example with a feminine demonstrative pronoun is Q 11:49: 'That is of the tidings of the Unseen, that We communicate to thee (*tilka min abnāʾi al-ghaybi nūḥīhā ilayka*)' which is preceded by the story of Noah. Finally, another demonstrative pronoun *dhālika* in Q 17:39 seems to refer to the passage immediately preceding it: 'That is from what your Lord communicated to you of the wisdom (*dhālika mimmā awḥā ilayka rabbuka mina 'l-ḥikmati*)'. The previous verses do not contain salvation history but rather prescriptions for the believers. The narrative and literary portions of the Qur'an are thus communicated to the Messenger through *waḥy*.

Unlike the sentences above, other relative sentences do not explicitly state what the relative pronoun refers to. However, on three occasions there is a partitive expression detailing that the source of the communication is the celestial archetype, *al-kitāb*, which is again indicative that it is the descriptive elements of the revelation which are communicated. Q 35:31 details this, 'And that which We have communicated to thee of the Book is the truth (*wa 'lladhī awḥaynā ilayka mina 'l-kitābi huwa 'l-haqqu*)' and in Q 29:45 the Messenger is told to recite (*talā*) what is communicated of the book (*mā ūḥiya mina 'l-kitāb*)'. If there is any doubt as to what book is being referred to, it is explicitly stated as the Lord's book in Q 18:27, which include a similar imperative to recitation, 'Recite what has been communicated to thee of the Book of thy Lord (*wa-tlu mā ūḥiya ilayka min kitābi rabbika*)'. It is particularly important to note that it is not the celestial archetype in its entirety that is communicated to the Messenger but a part of the book: the preposition *min* is here used in its partitive sense. The celestial archetype as a whole is never communicated to the Messenger: there is no verse where *al-kitāb* is the direct object of the verb *awḥā* in the Qur'an. This is in stark contrast to the celestial event elucidated in chapter 1 where the entirety of the archetype was 'sent down' by God.

In some ten verses the verb *awḥā* is linked to a preceding imperative verb by a relative pronoun. These imperative verbs are performative (to say, to recite) or

action (to follow, to listen, to adhere).[62] For example, Q 43:43 'So hold thou fast (*fa-stamsik*) unto that which has been communicated (*ūḥiya*) unto thee' and Q 29:45 'Recite what has been communicated to thee of the Book (*utlu mā uḥiya ilayka mina 'l-kitābi*)'. Thus, the relative pronouns refer to the content of the revelation. This is made clear in Q 6:145 where the Messenger details various dietary laws from what has been communicated to him previously: 'Say: "I do not find, in that which has been communicated to me (*qul lā ajidu fī mā ūḥiya ilayya*), aught forbidden to him who eats thereof except…'.

Another object of the verb *awḥā* is where what was communicated to the Messenger is quoted; it should be remembered, however, that this does not necessitate that the process of communication is verbal only its final form. These are of two types: the first is where *awḥā* is followed by the subjunctive particle *anna* 'that' which introduces the subsequent clause and a statement of what was communicated follows.[63] Four of these verses detail a monotheistic credal statement, such as Q 41:6 'It has been communicated to me that your God is One God (*yūḥā ilayya annamā ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥidun*)', [64] while in Q 72:1 the Messenger describes that a group of jinn were listening to the Qur'an (Q 72:1). The second type is where *awḥā* is followed by the subjunctive particle, *an*—an explicative subjunction which introduces a quotation—which is followed by an imperative statement.[65] This type represents an example of a prescriptive element of the revelation being communicated to the Messenger through *waḥy*, although this only occurs on a single occasion in Q 16:123, 'Then We communicated to thee: "Follow thou the creed of Abraham" (*thumma awḥaynā ilayka ani 'ttabiʿ millata Ibrhīma*)'.

This type of verse, that is, where the verb *awḥā* designates the divine command given by God, is far more prevalent in the 3rd person narratives relating to Biblical prophets.[66] Eight verses are related to Moses: on three occasions, the imperative is to cast or throw down his staff (Q 7:117, 7:160, 20:77 and 26:63); to

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[62] For the follow imperative (*ittabiʿ*) see: Q 6:50, 106; 7:203; 10:15, 109; 33:2; 46:9. For recite (*utlu*) see: Q 13:30; 29:45. For adhere (*istamsik*) see: Q 43:4 and for say *(qul*) see: Q 38:70.

[63] The majority have a pronominal suffix (*-hu*) or a conjunctive noun (*mā*) anticipating the subsequent clause.

[64] See also Q 21.108; 18:110; 21:25.

[65] This is traditionally categorised as *an al-mufassira*, see Wright, *Grammar*, II: 292.

[66] As observed somewhat earlier by Heinrich Speyer. See *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 241 fn. 2.

travel by night and make the exodus (Q 20:77 and 26:52); and with Aaron, to settle his people in Egypt (Q 10:87). Noah, as we have already seen, is instructed to build the Ark (Q 11:36-37 and 23:27) while Isaac and Jacob are instructed to adhere to prayer (Q 21:73). Such instructions are not only given to prophets, as already shown. In Q 5:11 Jesus' disciples, *al-hawāriyyīn*, are told to believe in Jesus and in Q 28:7, Moses' mother to suckle him. It is also through such divine imperatives that the bees are instructed to settle (Q 16:68) and God communicates to the seven heavens (*sabʿa samāwāt*) their command (*amrahā*, Q 41:12).

There is a range of content communicated through *waḥy* as indicated by the frequency of the verb *awḥā*. The foremost in relation to the Qur'anic Messenger are the descriptive parts of the revelation itself but, albeit somewhat rarer, prescriptive elements are also communicated through *waḥy*. For earlier messengers it appears that the verb *awḥā* primarily represents a type of divine command instructing the messengers to action.[67] Such divine instructions, however, can also be received by non-prophets or other of God's creation.

Before concluding this section, there remains one additional direct object of the verb *awḥā*, 'spirit' (*rūḥ*, Q 42:52) which is said to have been 'communicated' to the Messenger. Because this object appears—at least at first glance—to be somewhat in contrast to the others just discussed, which generally refer to the content of the communication, it requires a detailed treatment. The verse follows Q 42:51, as just discussed in the previous sub-section, and possibly affirms that the Messenger has received revelation in line with the modes elucidated in that verse: 'And thus We have communicated to thee a Spirit of Our bidding (*awḥaynā ilayka rūḥan min amrinā*)…'. It was this verse which led Wansbrough to posit that the verb *awḥā* is here a synonym for *arsala* 'to send', although his interpretation is dependent upon viewing the noun *rūḥ* as referring to an angelic Messenger. [68] In this verse, however, the communication of a 'spirit of God's bidding' might be indicative that the Messenger has been endowed with a capacity to interpret the coded divine communication.

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[67] One might be tempted to use this feature to explain that the scriptural element of earlier revelations was not communicated through *waḥy* but by some other method. For example, Moses is said to have been given (*atā*) the celestial source book (*al-kitāb*)—or at least a portion of it—on several occasions (e.g., Q Q 17:2), as well receiving tablets (*alwāḥ*, Q 7:145). See chapter 6 and prospects for further research.

[68] Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 1977, 34.

It must be admitted that a number of verses which include the noun *rūḥ* clearly refer to angelic messengers. There is the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*) which assists God in the sending down of revelation (Q 16:102) and in supporting Jesus (*ayyadnāhu*, Q 2:87, 253 and 5:110). There is also the Trustworthy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*) which again assisted God in the sending down of revelation (Q 26:192-4). These are traditionally identified with another messenger angel, Gabriel, who also assists God in sending down revelation (Q 2:97).[69] Whether these are synonymous as understood in Islamic tradition, however, remains problematic because there is no such explicit case to be found in the Qur'an. Sidney Griffith has argued that the spirit (*rūḥ*) in the Qur'an is a created agency and it is through the spirit that God communicates with mankind.[70] This might be the case for the aforementioned spirits which are qualified as 'holy' or 'trustworthy'. However, I remain unconvinced that all spirits in the Qur'an should be understood as angelic messengers. The spirit (*rūḥ*) without any additional adjective, is mentioned at least 16 times in the Qur'an and many of these do not appear to be referring to angelic messengers but rather to a spirit of a somewhat more abstract nature. Examples of this abound in the Qur'an such as when God breathed the spirit (*rūḥ*) into Adam to create him (Q 15:29, 32:9, 38:72) and when the spirit is also blown into Mary and thus related to Jesus in Q 21:91 and Q 66:12. Montgomery Watt already highlighted this distinction in regard to Q 42:52 when he argued that the spirit in this verse 'appears to be different from the function of the holy spirit or the trusty spirit as a messenger' as the spirit is 'received by the prophet, into himself in some sense'.[71] This is also the case in Q 40:15, only in this verse the 'spirit of His bidding' is 'cast' by God onto whom He wills, 'Exalter of ranks is He, Possessor of the Throne, casting the Spirit of His bidding (*yulqī 'l-rūḥa min amrihi*) upon whomever He will of His servants'. The fact that these spirits, which are related to God's command, are communicated or cast into the messengers is indicative of their non-corporeal and abstract nature. Such a spirit might well imbue God's chosen elect with prophecy and thus the ability to decipher the coded messages of *waḥy*.

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[69] For Gabriel see also, Q 2:98 and 66:4.

[70] *EQ*, s.v. 'Holy Spirit' (Griffith). Griffith also notes that God communicates to angels through the spirit, but I cannot see a verse which concurs with this view. While it is clear that the angels and the spirit are closely related, for example the angels 'descend' (*tanazzala*) with the spirit (e.g., Q 16:2 and 97:4) this is not conclusive evidence that God 'communicates' to them through the spirit, only that they are often in close proximity.

[71] Watt, Muhammad's Mecca, 64.

In concluding this subchapter, I would like to draw attention to two significant factors that have been discovered during the investigation of the root *w-ḥ-y*. The first is that the communication process of *waḥy* is a constituent part of the Qur'an's portrayal of how God communicates to His messengers. In fact, it is the primary way that both descriptive and prescriptive elements of the revelation are communicated to the Qur'anic Messenger. Related to this processual element is that the word *waḥy* should be understood as a verbal noun which is emphasising the exceptional mode of communication of the revelation. Second, to understand the concept it is necessary to recognise that the term has been considerably realigned from its profane application in pre-Islamic usage, to its divine application in its Qur'anic context. However, the pre-Islamic meaning of the root *w-ḥ-y*—where it signifies a communication that is meaningful for the one who receives it but is impenetrable to the outside observer—continues to have resonance within its Qur'anic context. We see this clearly in the three non-religious instances where the devils and Zechariah are the agents of the verb *awḥā*, but more importantly in the newly aligned divine application. Here, the unintelligibility of the communication is no longer due to cultural boundaries (e.g., a foreign language) or natural ones (e.g.,, birdsong), nor even the passage of time that rendered the writing impenetrable in pre-Islamic poetry, but now it is rather only God's elect—his prophets and those who he has chosen to communicate with—who can decipher the revelatory message. It is thus the highest form of communication.

2.3 Adopting a translation for the root *w-ḥ-y*

It will not have escaped the reader's attention that I have, so far, translated the term verb *awḥā* as 'to communicate' and the verbal noun *waḥy* as 'communication'. This has been to underscore that the root signifies a communication process. The more common translations are 'to inspire/inspiration' or 'to reveal/revelation'.[72] These, of course, also infer a form of communication has taken place. However, both terms clearly carry echoes of their Christian usage.[73] This need not necessarily be problematic: all words carry meaning to some extent from their original contexts and common usage. However, these terms might be considered especially loaded and, as such, the more theological neutral translation of 'communication' is preferred, understanding that it normally refers to divine communication in the Qur'an.[74] It remains, however, that neither this translation, nor any other for that matter, can be said to cover the somewhat nuanced underlying semantics, which have been discussed at length in this chapter.

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[72] The translations are often employed with little consistency, often interchangeably, and occasionally substituted for other words entirely. Arberry usually translates *awḥā* as 'to reveal', but exceptions include Q 5:111 wherein 'I inspired' (*awḥaytu*) and Q 23:27 'We said' (*awḥaynā*). The recent and highly commended translation by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem usually translates the verb as 'to reveal' but exceptions include Q 20:38 'We inspired, saying' (*awḥaynā mā yūḥā*) an Q 53:4 'sent' (*yūḥā*). See *The Qurʾan*, 197 and 347.

[73] Scholars have long pointed out the Christological implications of both revelation and inspiration. See Hartwig Hirschfeld, *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1903), 173; Wild, 'We have sent down', 137; *EI*^{2}, s.v. '*Waḥy*' (Rippin).

[74] Daniel Madigan also opted for 'communication' with the same caveat, see *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 144. His position is reiterated in *EQ*, s.v. 'Revelation and Inspiration'.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHRONOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION AND LITERARY CONTEXTS OF THE ROOTS *N-Z-L* AND *W-Ḥ-Y*

The previous two chapters of this thesis were concerned with a detailed philological analysis of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* in order to understand the meaning of the roots and their relationship to the Qur'anic concept of revelation. In these chapters I made the case that the former represents divine sending down and the latter divine communication. This chapter will take a step back, as it were, and consider the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* from a high-level perspective by analysing their distribution according to two different parameters. The first half of the chapter shows the distribution of the roots across Nöldeke's early, middle and late Meccan and Medinan chronological periods. The second half views their distribution from another perspective: across the various literary contexts of the Qur'an. This is achieved by classifying the verses in which the roots occur according to the primary literary forms or 'formal types' of the Qur'an.

If the analysis from chapters 2 and 3 is correct, it would be expected that the roots occur in different literary contexts because they represent different aspects of the concept of revelation. On the other hand, the chronological distribution would indicate whether there is a development in the concept of revelation, or if these do represent different aspects as I have argued, at which points in time these aspects were particularly relevant.

3.1 The chronological distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y*

In this section of the chapter, I will begin with a brief discussion of the dating scheme as well as elucidating the way that the chronological distribution of the roots has

been calculated. This is followed by the substantive parts which analyse the chronological distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y*.

3.1.1 The chronological scheme and the basic unit of measurement

It has already been detailed in the introduction of this thesis that Nöldeke's chronology is broadly accepted. Nöldeke determined four distinct textual groups based upon internal Qur'anic evidence, such as style, structure and terminology and posited a diachronic explanation for them.[1] While Nöldeke offered a chronological order of suras within each chronological period, it will suffice for the analysis here to utilise the framework of chronological units without any reference to the chronological orders of suras that he posited for each subgroup.

The basic unit of measurement for calculating the distribution of the root *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* across the chronological scheme is the verse. There are 257 verses which include the root *n-z-l* and 70 verses which include the root *w-ḥ-y*. The significant difference in the number of verses comes as no surprise given that the root *n-z-l* occurs almost four times as often as the root *w-ḥ-y*, that is, 293 vs. 78 instances. As can be seen from the number of verses vs. the number of instances, the vast majority of the verses include a single instance of either root. On rare occasions, however, the root can occur more than once in a single verse.[2] These, however, remain part of a single chronological setting, the verse, and are counted as such.

It might be objected that because verse length varies quite considerably in the Qur'an it would be necessary to take account of this fact to accurately account for the distribution of the two roots.[3] However, it is not the length of the verse which

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[1] See Nöldeke et al., *The history*, esp. 55-61 (i/66-74). For Weil's contribution especially regarding the three subgroups of Meccan suras, see *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Koran* (Velhagen & Klasing, 1844), 54–80.

[2] There are 34 verses where there are two instances of the root *n-z-l*, and a single verse with three instances (Q 23:39). There are six verses which include two instances of the root *w-ḥ-y* and a single with three instances (Q 4:163).

[3] Verse length can be counted in a number of different ways. Recently Sinai counted verses by the number of Latin transcription letters, see 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. M.A. Abdel Haleem, and Mustafa Shah (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 20. Sinai relies on the transliteration of the Qur'an by Hans Zirker available at http://duepublico.uni-duisberg-essen.de/servlets/DocumentServlet?id=10802. Nora K. Schmid's assessment of verse length in the Meccan suras takes the syllable as the basic unit, see 'Quantitative Text Analysis and Its Application to the Qurʾān: Some Preliminary Considerations'. Alternatively, length has also been counted by line: Arne Ambros opted to count each sura by the number of lines of

is of concern, but the chronological position of the verse—the length of the verse, for at least the analysis here, is not an important factor.[4]

It should also be noted that I made no attempt to include, or more accurately remove, in what follows, verses which Nöldeke posited as additions; that is, individual verses or groups of verses which he considered to originate from a different chronological period to the sura proper. This is for three reasons. The first is that the notion of additions, and how to identify them, remains rather controversial—there is hardly a scholarly consensus of what verses should be counted as additions if they can be identified at all.[5] The second is that, if one was to take account of the possible additions, it then raises the thorny question of where one might count these verses—not all additions are necessarily identified as originating in a particular chronological period. For example, while Nöldeke might detail that a verse is a Medinan insertion into a Meccan sura, Meccan-period additions might simply be considered 'a later Meccan addition' in an 'early Meccan sura'.[6] He also noted, quite rightly, that an 'exact chronological order of the individual parts would be unworkable and impossible', notwithstanding Bell's later attempts.[7] The third and perhaps most pertinent reason is that the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* are only rarely attested

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Flügel's edition of the Qur'an because 'its lines are much more uniformly filled with text than those of the various printings of the Standard Text'. See *A Concise Dictionary*, 368–71.

[4] Even if verse length is taken into account there is very little difference between the distributions of the two roots when compared to counting by verse alone. This might be explained because the average number of lines per verse which include the root *n-z-l* is 1.5 with a standard deviation of 1.1 lines; and for the root *w-ḥ-y* an average of 1.4 lines and a similarly low standard deviation of 0.9 lines. Verses were counted by the number of printed lines they constitute in Flügel's second edition, see *Corani textus Arabicus* (Lipsiae: Ernesti Bredtii, 1881). As is well known, the verse numbering of Flügel's edition differs from the standard Egyptian edition of the Qur'an. Due attention was paid to ensure the correct verse and/or section of a verse was counted (e.g., when Flügel amalgamates two verses of the Egyptian standard edition into one verse). Following Ambros' counting system, the counting of lines was rounded to the nearest half-line, see *A Concise Dictionary*, 368.

[5] On the types of additions found in the Meccan suras, see Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 201–3; Tilman Nagel, *Medinensische Einschübe in mekkanischen Suren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). For further examples and ways of identifying such additions throughout the corpus, see Nicolai Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs', in *Islam and its Past: Jāhiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69–119; Nicolai Sinai, 'Two Types of Inner-Qur'anic Interpretation', in *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Medieval Orient*, ed. George Tamer et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 253–88.

[6] See for example, Q 53:23, which Nöldeke considers 'undoubtedly somewhat later than the rest of the sūra' in Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 85 (i/103).

[7] See Nöldeke et al., 53 (i/65). As such, any individual passages he considered as belonging to a different period were discussed within the context of the relevant sura. For Bell's attempts, see particularly his commentary on the Qur'an, *A commentary on the Qur'ān*, 1991.

in such verses: nine for the former and a single verse for the latter.[8] They therefore have little bearing on the statistics presented in this chapter.

3.1.2 The Qur'an by verse count

Before calculating the distribution of the two roots it is first necessary to determine the number of verses for each chronological period and the amount that each period represents of the total Qur'anic corpus. This is to establish the expected distribution figure which works as a benchmark from which to assess the distribution of the roots. As with the entirety of the thesis, the base text is the standard Egyptian edition of the Qur'an which is based upon the reading of Ḥafṣ *ʿan* ʿĀṣim. This edition includes 6766 verses.[9] To calculate the number of verses for each chronological period each sura was assigned to one of Nöldeke's four chronological periods. The total number of verses of each sura in each chronological period was then totaled and the distribution calculated in terms of percentage rounded to the nearest whole number. This yields the following results:

Table 3.1: The total number of verses in the standard Egyptian edition of the Qur'an divided between Nöldeke's chronological periods[10]

Chronological period	Number of verses	Percentage of the Qur'anic corpus (in verses)
Early Meccan suras	1212	19%
Middle Meccan suras	1905	31%
Late Meccan suras	1656	27%
Medinan suras	1463	23%

As is shown by Table 3.1 above, the different chronological periods vary considerably in terms of the number of verses they contain. Thus, it follows that if

[8] In *The history,* Nöldeke considered the following verses additions, which for ease of reference, are followed by the relevant page references in the English eddition only. For verses which include the root *n-z-l* see: Q 2:164, 170 (p.145); 6:91 (p.131); 7:157 (p.129); 16:44 (p.119); 22, 5, 63, 71 (p.172); 53:23 (p.85). And for the root *w-ḥ–y*, Q 16:123 (p.119).
[9] These statistics are widely available. I have utilised the figures provided by Ambros in his work *A Concise Dictionary*, 368–71.
[10] From this point onward, the tables will not reference the 'standard Egyptian edition of the Qur'an' nor 'Nöldeke's chronological periods'. I will rather detail only 'the Qur'an' and 'chronological periods' to make the titulature somewhat less cumbersome.

the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* had an even distribution across the chronological periods, the percentages would mirror those in the table. There would be fewer verses appearing in, for instance, the early Meccan period as opposed to the Medinan because the former includes less verses than the latter. These figures serve as the benchmark from which to analyse the distribution of the two roots.

3.1.3 The chronological distribution of the root *n-z-l*

In Table 3.2 the number of verses which include the root *n-z-l* in each chronological period is represented in terms of absolute numbers as well as a percentage of the total number of verses which include the root *n-z-l*, i.e., the 'corpus'. For comparative perspective the expected distribution value, which is based upon the size of each chronological period as already shown in Table 3.1, is included to illustrate the relationship between the actual distribution and the benchmark distribution.

Table 3.2: The chronological distribution of the root *n-z-l*

	Actual figures		**Expected** figures	
Chronological period	Number of verses	Percentage of *n-z-l* corpus in each period	Number of verses	Percentage of *n-z-l* corpus in each period
Early Meccan	9	4%	49	19%
Middle Meccan	57	22%	80	31%
Late Meccan	93	36%	69	27%
Medinan	98	38%	59	23%

The frequency of the root *n-z-l* increases in each chronological period. While it is expected that that the late Meccan and Medinan chronological periods account for a larger proportion of the distribution, this increase cannot be fully explained in this way. This is because according to the expected distribution figures there should be around 128 verses attested in these two periods, whereas the actual figure is larger, with 191 verses. On the other hand, the root *n-z-l* is less attested in the early and middle Meccan period: according to the expected distribution there should be roughly 129 verses whereas the actual distribution accounts for only roughly half this amount at 66 verses. While the root *n-z-l* is well attested from the middle

Meccan period onwards, it is clearly concentrated in the late Meccan and Medinan periods.

3.1.4 The chronological distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y*

Table 3.3 details the chronological distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y* and the expected distribution for comparative perspective:

Table 3.3: The chronological distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y*

	Actual figures		**Expected** figures	
Chronological period	Number of verses	Percentage of *w-ḥ-y* corpus in each period	Number of verses	Percentage of *w-ḥ-y* corpus in each period
Early Meccan	3	4%	13	19%
Middle Meccan	22	31%	22	31%
Late Meccan	40	57%	19	27%
Medinan	5	7%	16	23%

The distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y* is particularly concentrated in the late Meccan period where it is attested in some 40 verses, which is over double the expected distribution figure. It is also well attested in the middle Meccan period, where the number of verses are equal to the expected distribution. The root is less attested in the early Meccan period and the Medinan period where it occurs in significantly less verses when compared to the expected distribution figures. It is particularly striking that after the significant amount of verses attested in the late Meccan period there is a substantial decrease in the Medinan period.

3.1.5 Conclusion

It has been shown in this subsection that the root *n-z-l* is well attested from the middle Meccan period and is particularly concentrated in the late Meccan and Median periods. On the other hand, the root *w-ḥ-y* is attested almost exclusively in the middle and late Meccan period and, significantly, is almost totally absent in the Medinan period.

3.2 Form-critical analysis of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y*

Before introducing the data relating to the distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* according to formal type, it is necessary to begin with a brief methodological exposition of the form-critical method focusing on how it has been applied to the Qur'an and how it is utilised in this study. In this section, I will detail the reasons why the data is presented according to the main formal types of the Qur'an, which I argue is sufficient to analyse the context in which the roots occur. I will then define how the distribution of the roots will be counted across the formal types. After the required preamble, the distribution of the roots will be illustrated and conclusions drawn regarding the significance of the distributions across the formal types.

3.2.1 Form criticism of the Qur'an

The principles of form criticism were developed in Biblical Studies. Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) first recognised that in order to properly interpret the Old Testament it is necessary to identify and catalogue the standardised forms of language within the text.[11] Since Gunkel's groundbreaking studies, form criticism has played a major role in the interpretation of Biblical texts.[12] In Biblical Studies the question of the history of genre and form has developed into a branch of historical-critical research because such genres are said to arise in a particular *Sitz im Leben*.[13] Thus, it is important to point out that the form-criticism of the Qur'an

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[11] See, for example, Hermann Gunkel, 'Fundamental Problems of Hebrew Literary History', in *What remains of the Old Testament and other essays*, trans. A.K. Dallas (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928), 57–68. Gunkel was undoubtedly influenced by the folkloric studies of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm who classified the folk traditions of the German people according to genre.

[12] On the principles of form criticism and its significance in Biblical studies, see Herbert Ferdinand Hahn, *The Old Testament in modern research* (London: SCM Press, 1956); Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship. Old Testament Series (Philadelphia, Pa: Fortress Press, 1971); R. J. Coggins and J. L Houlden, *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 240–41; Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie, *To each its own meaning: an introduction to biblical criticisms and their application* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 58–89. For an instructive and deeply reflective reading of form criticism, see Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

[13] According to Gene M. Tucker form criticism is a 'means of identifying the genres of that [Old Testament] literature, their structures, intentions and settings in order to understand the oral stage of their development', see *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 1. In recent years form criticism has moved away from historical reconstructions to focus on forms and genre from the perspective of literary theory, see Johannes P. Floss, 'Form, Source, and Redaction

described below, while indebted to biblical form criticism, does not presuppose that each literary form emerges from a particular *Sitz im Leben*, but is rather concerned with precisely identifying and recording the literary forms which appear throughout the Qur'anic corpus.[14] These forms are, in turn, employed as an interpretative tool.

The idea that certain verses of the Qur'an can be grouped together into paragraphs or sections is hardly new. Nöldeke recognised long ago that multiple verses of the Qur'an belong together as did Bell who, despite his atomization of the Qur'an, stated that 'many surahs of the Qur'ān fall into short sections or paragraphs.'[15] Bell went on to argue that because the Qur'anic Messenger's function was to convey messages to his contemporaries, one needs to look to 'didactic' rather than poetic or artistic forms to determine the literary forms of the Qur'an.[16] Echoing Bell, Welch in his 1981 *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article 'al-Ḳurʾān', maintained that it was not possible to define parts of the Qur'an according to standard literary forms—myth, legend, saga, short story, parable etc.—, but neither could it be defined

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Criticism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 591–603.

[14] It should be noted that historical-critical form criticism has been applied to the Qur'an. John Wansbrough utilised form-critical techniques to describe how traditions might evolve over time corresponding to different cultural environments. However, Wansbrough made little attempt to define the Qur'an's own forms, preferring to apply the biblical prophetic categories as developed by Claus Westermann. See, *Quranic studies*, 1977. For Claus Westermann's form criticism, see *Basic forms of prophetic speech*, trans. H.C. White (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991); originally published as *Grundformen prophetischer Rede* (München: C Kaiser, 1960). For a useful critical overview of Wansbrough's application of form criticism see, Michael Graves, 'Form Criticism or a Rolling Corpus: The Methodology of John Wansbrough through the Lens of Biblical Studies.', *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* 1, no. 1 (2017): 47–92; and also Devin J. Stewart, 'Wansbrough, Bultmann, and the Theory of Variant Traditions in the Qur'ān', in *Qur'ānic studies today*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Michael Anthony Sells (London: Routledge, 2016), 17–51. A recent study has attempted to systematically apply biblical form-critical types to the Qur'an and to draw historical conclusions vis-à-vis their *Sitz im Leben*, see Karim Samji, *The Qurʾān: A Form-Critical History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

[15] See Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 24; Bell, *Introduction*, 71. For other early works that considered the various literary genres of the Qur'an, see Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, who identified several literary forms and posited a diachronic explanation for them; S.D. Goitein, 'Das Gebet im Qorān' (Ph.D, Universität Frankfurt am Main, 1923) considered the form of prayers in the Qur'an; Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* delineated the types of narrative and their formulaic markers; see also Gustav Richter, *Der Sprachstil des Koran* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1940), although the work remained unfinished.

[16] Bell, *Introduction*, 71 and for his discussion on the literary character of the Qur'an, see pp. 71–82. Bell's observation was made against Müller's (rejected) hypothesis that the Qur'an's suras were based on strophic compositions. See, David Heinrich Müller, *Die Propheten in ihrer ursprünglichen Form: die Grundgesetze der ursemitischen Poesie erschlossen und nachgewiesen in Bibel, Keilinschriften und Koran und in ihren Wirkungen erkannt in den Chören der griechischen Tragödie* (Wien: A. Hölder, 1896).

by didactic forms because, while parts of the Qur'an can be described as didactic, many of its parts cannot.[17] Accordingly, Welch in a statement reminiscent of Bell's initial observation, argued that the literary forms of the Qur'an should be defined in 'terms of its own distinctive types of material'.[18] While Welch identified several general forms, it was not until the pioneering work of Neuwirth that an in-depth study of the Qur'an's own forms was made. In her 1981 book '*Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*', she devoted considerable discussion to the '*Gesätze*', that is, the various compositional 'sections' that make up the Meccan suras.[19] Neuwirth observed that while subject matter is the most important determinant for distinguishing such sections, considerations of rhyme, verse structure and length, stylistic considerations (parallelism, antithesis etc.), phraseology and speaker are also pertinent.[20] This was followed by Robinson's 1994 work '*Discovering the Qur'an*', which rendered many of the formal types of the Meccan suras established in Neuwirth's study into English, albeit with some additions and amendments.[21] The most significant recent contribution to the delineation of the Qur'an's own forms was authored by Sinai and published online as part of the Corpus Coranicum project, which is again based upon an analysis of the Meccan portion of the Qur'an.[22] Despite Sinai's ready acknowledgement that the taxonomy is based upon Neuwirth's original work, he has not only clarified many of

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[17] *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch).
[18] *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'.
[19] Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007. See esp. pp. 176-203 for the explanations of the formal types, and pp. 204ff for the form-critical analysis of individual suras. The main findings of this work regarding the formal types of the Qur'an are summarised in *EQ*, s.v. 'Form and Structure'. The form-critical analysis is also included in her commentary to the early Meccan suras, see *Frühmekkanische Suren*.
[20] Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 176; see also Neal Robinson who talks of the task being much easier for the Arabist who can 'detect changes in rhyme and rhythm, and the occurrence of different syntactic structures', *Discovering the Qur'an*, 100. It must be admitted, however, that the identification of textual boundaries within the Qur'anic text remains a somewhat complicated and, at times, subjective task. Marianna Klar has recently published several articles dealing with the issues of textual boundaries which seek to identify further, more objective ways, of identifying textual boundaries. See 'Re-examining Textual Boundaries: Towards a Form-Critical Surāt al-Kahf'; 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure Part II'; 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure Part I'; see also an overview of such 'paragraphing' in Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 81–110.
[21] Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 97–124.
[22] The CC project is directed by Angelika Neuwirth and is a research project of the Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Germany. See http://www.corpuscoranicum.de.

the existing forms by adding additional textual criteria for their delineation, but has also introduced several new forms.[23]

There has been considerable agreement between the aforementioned form-critical studies of the Qur'an regarding what I term the 'primary formal types of the Qur'an', that is, the sections which account for the vast majority of the Qur'anic material.[24] The criteria detailed in the in-depth studies of Neuwirth, Robinson and Sinai for delineating the sub-types which make up the primary formal types does vary at times, although there are also multiple examples of consensus.[25] For the purposes of this chapter, it is not necessary to go into the minutiae of the differences in the various criteria of the formal sub-types because the primary concern is to show the general context in which the verses appear. This can be achieved by classifying the verses according to the primary formal types of the Qur'an. I will now propose the primary formal types of the Qur'an from which the distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* will be analysed.

3.2.2 The primary formal types of the Qur'an

Table 3.4 below shows the proposed primary formal types and their equivalence in previous form-critical studies. As already detailed above, the extensive form-critical studies are focussed on the Meccan period only, and while there is no extensive form-critical study of the Medinan Qur'an to date, there are summary analyses available which are referred to in the table. Moreover, the majority of the Medinan material can be accounted for within the existing primary formal types established for the Meccan material—even the 'Regulations' formal type which, while, primarily occurring in the Medinan period is also attested, somewhat rarely, in the

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[23] See, Nicolai Sinai, 'Register der in den frühmekkanischen Suren erscheinenden Textsorten', accessed 15 January 2019, http://www.corpuscoranicum.de/kommentar/einleitung. Because this is an online article and therefore lacking page numbers, for ease of reference I will refer to the specific form heading in German, e.g., s.v. 'Offenbarungsbestätigungen', when referencing a section of this taxonomy.

[24] There is also a certain amount of overlap between these categories and the Qur'an's main themes. See for example, Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qurʾān* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980); Faruq Sherif, *A Guide to the Contents of the Qurʾan* (Reading: Garnet, 1998).

[25] For example, the sub-types which make up the eschatological sections. See, Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 188, 190–91; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 103–6; Sinai, 'Register' s.v. 'Antithesen'; 'eschatologische Temporalsätze'; 'Rückblenden'.

late Meccan period. Other specifically Medinan material, such as the introduction of narratives relating to events experienced by the emerging community (e.g., Q 3:155-74), is necessarily classified as part of the existing 'Narratives' primary formal type because they conform to this type.

Table 3.4	Equivalent to:			
Proposed primary formal types	**Sinai (CC, 2017)**[26]	**Robinson (1996)**[27]	**Neuwirth (1981/2007, 2002)**[28]	**Welch (1981)**[29]
Eschatology	Eschatological kerygma	Eschatological sections	Eschatological passages	Others ('dramatic scenes')
Messenger addresses	Messenger addresses	Messenger sections	Conclusion imperatives, Encouragement of the Prophet	Say-passages (of the 'second group of say-statements'); addresses to Muhammad
Narratives	Historical signs	Narrative sections	Lessons from history	Narratives
Polemics	Polemics	Polemical sections	Polemic	Say-passages
Regulations	Qur'anic law	-	Regulations	Regulations
Revelation affirmations	Revelation affirmations	Revelation sections	Revelation affirmations	-
Signs	Cosmic signs	Sign sections	Signs	Sign-passages

All of the proposed primary formal types have equivalences in previous form-critical studies. While most of the primary formal types are relatively self-explanatory it is worth outlining their basic features. The 'eschatology' formal type includes material detailing the various scenarios preceding Judgement Day which are often indicated by *idhā* phrase clusters, as well as the events which will occur on that day, which are usually introduced by the adverb *yawmaʾidhin*, descriptions of the hereafter and the consequences for the blessed and the damned.[30] The 'Messenger addresses' consists of verses in which the Messenger is addressed in the

[26] Sinai, 'Register'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 12–13, 14–16, 161-214.
[27] Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 97–124.
[28] Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 187–203, 239–63; Angelika Neuwirth, 'Form and Structure', in *EQ*, 2002.
[29] *EI*^{2} , s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch).
[30] See *EI*^{2} , s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān' (Welch); Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 191; Neuwirth, 'Form and Structure'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 104–5; Sinai, 'Register', s.v. 'eschatologische Temporalsätze'. Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 162–66.

second person singular by the divine speaker.[31] Inevitably such addresses include directives such as calls for recitation; ethical behaviour; patience; preaching and *qul* ('say') directives. The 'narratives' include material relating to Arabian lore such as the stories of ʿĀd, Thamūd; retribution legends, which recall God's punishment of past peoples; mere evocations to known events; and lengthy narratives relating to previous prophets which frequently include formal introductions such as *a-lam tara*.[32] The 'polemics' include verses that are either addressed directly to adversaries of the Qur'anic Messenger in the 1st person plural or indirectly in the 3rd person plural, while other verses recall vigorous debates between the adversaries and the Qur'anic Messenger.[33] In such verses, the opponents are quoted and various responses given, which are sometimes in the form of direct replies, e.g., *wa-yaqūlūna…fa-qul*. 'Regulations', which are primarily attested in the Medinan period, include material relating to law and community practice, such as prayer prescriptions and dietary laws.[34] 'Revelation affirmations' are verses which are concerned with the origin and authority of the revelation and explicate the revelation's divine provenance; typically, they have free-floating suffices or deictics.[35] Finally, the 'signs' formal type includes descriptions of the bountiful vegetation, fauna, and all that is provided to mankind by God and typically include verbs in the 3rd person perfect.[36]

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[31] See *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'; Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 196–97, 200–201; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 100, 109–10, 120–22; Sinai, 'Register' s.v., 'Andreden des Verkünders'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 12–14.

[32] See *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'; Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 192; Neuwirth, 'Form and Structure'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 106–9; Sinai, 'Register' s.v. 'Erzählungen'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 169–72. For an extensive treatment of the narrative sections and their formal markers on which the aforementioned form-critical studies rely, see Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 1–77.

[33] See *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'; Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 200; Neuwirth, 'Form and Structure'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 115, 116–20; Sinai, 'Register' s.v. 'Polemik'; 'gegnerische Fragen und Einwände'; 'polemische Fragen''; 'polemische Raisonnements'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 176–79, 200–202.

[34] See *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'; Neuwirth, 'Form and Structure'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 202–5.

[35] See Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 200–201; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 114; Sinai, 'Register', s.v. 'Offenbarungsbestätigungen und Beglaubigungen des Verkünders'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 14–16. It might be argued that properly understood 'revelation affirmations' should not be considered a 'primary formal type' because it cannot be divided into smaller formal units like the other categories. However, such 'self-referential' verses are prevelant throughout the Qur'an.

[36] See *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'; Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 192–96; Neuwirth, 'Form and Structure'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 109–12; Sinai, 'Register' s.v. 'Werkaffirmationen'; Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 172–74.

The observant reader of the Qur'an will also no doubt notice that not all verses can fit into the above categories; there are some verses which seem to stand on their own, so to speak. On rare occasions the roots *n-z-l* or *w-ḥ-y* are attested in such verses. However, rather than listing these formal types separately in the analysis that follows, it is preferable to group them together under a single section titled 'miscellaneous' because they represent only a very small portion of the distribution of the two roots. The 'miscellaneous' section includes the following formal types: (i) 'Appeals' are verses that are addressed directly to the audience in the 1st person plural and instruct the audience to moral behaviour such as to follow the revelation;[37] (ii) 'Didactic questions' are verses that include the formula '*mā adrāka mā x*' ('what has taught thee'), and which despite the second person singular addressee, are best understood as a general address to the individual listeners and/or audience of the recitation, as opposed to the Messenger specifically;[38] (iii) 'Eulogies' are verses that praise God and are introduced by such phrases as *al-ḥamd*, *tabāraka* etc.;[39] and (iv) 'Messenger certifications' are verses where the Messenger is spoken about in the 3rd person singular and objectify the Messenger's experience by speaking about him.[40]

3.2.3 The basic unit of measurement

The basic unit of measurement, like the first section of the chapter, will be the verse, because it is the verse which is classified according to formal type. Verses with multiple instances of either root, which are very few as already discussed, are counted as a single instance because the verse, again, represents an individual setting—this time in terms of context as opposed to chronology. Unlike the chronological distribution where it was possible to calculate an expected distribution figure from which to base the analysis, this is not possible with the analysis of the formal types, because, as already detailed, the entire Qur'anic corpus has not as yet

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[37] See Sinai, 'Register', s.v. 'Aufrufe'.
[38] See Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 132; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 119–20; Sinai, 'Register', s.v. 'Lehrfragen'.
[39] Neuwirth does not designate this as a formal group, although verses are described as 'doxologies' in several instances: for example, in her form analysis of Q 25, see Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 273; for Sinai's entry see, 'Register' s.v. 'Eulogien'.
[40] See Sinai, 'Register', s.v. 'Beglaubigungen des Verkünders und Visionsberichte'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 114. Neuwirth, however, did not distinguish between 'revelation affirmations' and 'Messenger certifications', see Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 200.

been subject to form-critical analysis. Although it is possible to show, for example, that the 'revelation affirmation' formal type accounts for 23% of the verses which include the root *n-z-l* it is impossible to know what percentage this represents of *all* 'revelations affirmations' attested in the Qur'an. Therefore, it is not possible to take account of whether this figure might be due to the fact that revelation affirmations account for a larger percentage of the Qur'anic corpus compared to other formal types. While it may be expected that the roots are distributed evenly in terms of chronology (which, however, they are not as has just been show) it would not necessarily be the case that they occur in all literary contexts to the same degree. Thus, such an analysis which considers the distribution in terms of the roots *themselves* can contribute greatly to understanding the type of contexts that the two roots occur in.

3.2.4 The distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* according to formal type

Now that the basic matters have been dealt with, it is possible to detail the results of the form-critical analysis as shown below:[41]

Table 3.5: The distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* by primary formal type (measured in verses)[42]

Primary formal types	**The *n-z-l* corpus**	**The *w-ḥ-y* corpus**
Eschatology	7%	3%
Messenger addresses	5%	40%
Narratives	10%	26%
Polemics	30%	11%
Regulations	4%	1%
Revelation affirmations	23%	14%
Signs	14%	3%
Miscellaneous	7%[43]	1%[44]

[41] For a complete index of the verses please refer to Appendix I and II.
[42] Percentages are rounded and therefore they do not necessarily add up to 100%.
[43] The formal types are: appeals (3.5%), didactic questions and answers (0.5%), eulogy (1%) and Messenger accreditations (2%).
[44] The formal type is: Messenger certifications (1%).

The root *n-z-l* is attested in all of the formal types and is concentrated in the 'polemics' (30%), 'revelation affirmations' (23%) and 'signs' (14%) formal types which account collectively for 67% of the total distribution of the root. There are fewer verses attested in the 'narratives' (10%), 'eschatological' (7%), 'Messenger addresses' (5%) and 'regulations' (4%) formal types as well as only 7% in the 'miscellaneous' section. The root *w-ḥ-y* is also attested in all of the formal types but is particularly concentrated in the 'Messenger addresses' (40%), 'narratives' (26%) and 'revelation affirmations' (14%), which account collectively for 80% of the total distribution. There are significantly fewer verses in the 'polemics' (11%), 'signs' (3%), 'eschatological' (3%) and 'regulations' (1%) formal types and 1% in the 'miscellaneous' section. The root *n-z-l* has a greater distribution across the different formal types than the root *w-ḥ-y*: the top three values represent 67% of the distribution of the root *n-z-l*, whereas for the root *w-ḥ-y* the total is some 80% of the distribution.

Another important observation is that the top three most attested types of each root differ in all but a single formal type. The largest concentration of the root *n-z-l* is in the 'polemics' formal type with 30%, closely followed by 23% in the 'revelation affirmations' and dropping down to 13% in the 'signs' category. It is striking that only 11% of the distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y* is found within 'polemics', and only 3% in the 'signs' formal type, representing the 4th and 5th positions in the table respectively. Turning to the root *w-ḥ-y*, the largest concentration is in the 'Messenger addresses' formal type which accounts for 40% of the distribution, followed by the 'narratives', accounting for 26% and finally the 'revelation affirmations' formal type, which amounts to 14%. The root *n-z-l* on the other hand is attested very little in the Messenger addresses, at only 5%, which is the second lowest attestation and similarly rarely occurs in the narrative sections at 10%. The revelation affirmations represent the only formal type that is well attested in both distributions: it is the second most prevalent formal type of the root *n-z-l*, whereas it is third most prevalent formal type of the root *w-ḥ-y*. While it is clear that both roots are well attested in this formal type it appears that there is a greater relationship between the root *n-z-l* and revelation affirmations, especially if relative corpus size is taken into account: the total number of revelation affirmations which include the root *n-z-l* is some 61 verses whereas the root *w-ḥ-y* is attested in 11 verses.

The question then arises of what is the significance of the distribution of the roots across the primary formal types of the Qur'an? The first basic point is that because the two roots vary significantly in their distribution this strengthens the proposition from the preceding two chapters that the roots mean different things and evoke different concepts; otherwise one would expect the distributions to mirror one another to a certain extent and not be significantly different. Second, the top three formal types for each root are consistent with the meanings and the concepts as identified in the earlier analysis. As I have argued that the root *n-z-l* refers to the 'sending down' of revelation, which explicates that the revelation has been sent down by God as well as its celestial origin, it is perfectly fitting that almost a quarter of the instances of the root are found in sections which are concerned with affirming the status of the revelation. It is also appropriate that some 30% of the instances of the root *n-z-l* are attested in the polemical sections where one of the main subjects of debate is the authenticity of the revelation. It is already well-known that the sending down of water and related phenomena figures prominently in the sign sections of the Qur'an and it is therefore of no surprise that this formal type accounts for 14% of the distribution.

The same observation can be made for the top three formal types of the root *w-ḥ-y*, which supports the reading that it refers to divine communication. It is apt that some 40% of the verses which include the root *w-ḥ-y* are of the Messenger address formal type where God is addressing the Messenger in the second person. These verses are often about God's personal communication with the Messenger to encourage him in the face of adversity or to give specific instructions. Following this, 26% of the verses are found in narrative sections. These narratives are generally concerned with the experiences of earlier prophets and therefore it is fitting that the root appears extensively in these sections, as it is how God communicates to His messengers. Finally, because the root *w-ḥ-y* represents a special form of divine communication it is also expected that this would appear in contexts which are affirming the revelation—this is, after all, the way that it has been communicated.

3.3 Chronology of formal types

In this chapter I have shown the distributions of the two roots in terms of chronology and literary formal type. One might, then, be tempted to explain the distribution of

the two roots, and particularly the almost total absence of the root *w-ḥ-y* in the Medinan period, with recourse to the literary formal types in which they appear. However, as has already been discussed, despite there being no detailed form-critical analysis of the Medinan Qur'an, summary analyses have shown, with only a few exceptions, that all of the Meccan formal types are met to greater or lesser extent in the Medinan portion of the Qur'an.[45]

It is worth considering briefly the top three formal types of the root *w-ḥ-y* in greater detail, the 'Messenger addresses', 'narratives' and 'revelation affirmations', to be sure that the extensive drop-off of the root cannot be adequately explained in these terms. First, it is possible to see that all of these formal types continue into the Medinan period from the root *n-z-l* which is attested in all three of these formal types in the Medinan period—particularly in the revelation affirmations in over 18 verses.[46] On a wider scale, it is evident that the 'Messenger addresses' continue to form a substantial part of the text shown by the prevalence of the second person singular, personal pronouns and pronominal suffixes as well as by the frequent vocatives 'O Prophet' (*yā-ayyuhā 'l-nabī*) and 'O Messenger' (*yā-ayyuhā 'l-rasūl*).[47] A brief review of only six of the 23 suras assigned to the period shows that the singular *qul* imperative occurs well over 70 times and yet none include the root *w-ḥ-y*.[48] Moreover, in Sinai's recent analysis of the Medinan material one of the main doctrinal elements he discerns from the text is an elevation in the Messenger's status and diversification of his role.[49] Many of the verses which he references in support of this premise address the Messenger directly, such as when the Messenger is instructed to judge (e.g., Q 5:48-49). The 'narratives', admittedly, are far less

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[45] The existence of the same types of literary material in the Medinan period is also shown in several studies of individual suras, see for example Zahniser, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders in Two Long Sūras: Al-Baqara and Al-Nisā''; Robinson, 'Hands Outstretched'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 203–23; El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'an'; Klar, 'Re-examining Textual Boundaries: Towards a Form-Critical Surāt al-Kahf'; Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure Part II'; Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure Part I'; see also Mir, 'The Sūra as Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qurʾān Exegesis'; Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān*.

[46] Messenger address in four verses; narratives in nine verses.

[47] See Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 197. For *al-nabī*, see: Q 8:64, 65, 70, 9:33, 33:1, 28, 50, 59, 60:12, 65:1, 66:1, 9 and Q 5:41 for *al-rasūl*.

[48] The imperative was counted in suras 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

[49] See Nicolai Sinai, 'The Unknown Known: Some Groundwork for Interpreting the Medinan Qur'an', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 66 (2015): 47–96. This article includes a useful appendix of the 'stylistic and thematic characteristics of the Medinan suras'. See the concluding section of the next chapter for further discussion of the role of the Messenger in the Medinan period.

common in the Medinan portion of the Qur'an, although a number of suras do contain lengthy narratives (e.g., Q 2, 3 and 5) and there are many brief allusions to such narratives in many of the remaining suras.[50] The absence of the root *w-ḥ-y* in the Medinan period cannot be accounted for because of the chronological distribution of the literary types.

On the other hand, it cannot be totally discounted that the chronological distribution of the root *n-z-l* might coincide with the chronological distribution of the literary types until the entire Qur'an is subjected to such a form-critical reading. However, it is perhaps unlikely that such a formulaic explanation would be satisfactory given the complexity of the Qur'anic text. Given that the hypothesis at the outset of this chapter has been proven because the literary contexts of each root confirm the findings from chapters 2 and 3, it is therefore possible that the chronological distribution represents the points in time when the different aspects of the concept of revelation were particularly relevant. To prove this, it is necessary to try to make sense of the combination of both chronological distribution and literary contexts, which is the subject of the next chapter.

[50] See, for example: Q 4:171-173; 9:70, 114; 22:26-29, 43; 60:4; 61:5-7.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRINCIPAL RHETORICAL FUNCTIONS OF DIVINE SENDING DOWN AND DIVINE COMMUNICATION

The following chapter is concerned with identifying how the concepts of divine sending down and divine communication function rhetorically in the various literary contexts of the Qur'an. The analysis proceeds diachronically in order to identify how the Qur'an employs the two concepts over time and whether this can shed light on the reasons for the chronological distribution of the two roots identified in the previous chapter. The first section considers the root *n-z-l* and shows that the principal function of divine sending down is to affirm the divine origin of the revelation by referring to the celestial event whereby revelation was 'sent down', an event which is shown to have consequences for the audience of the recitations and congruity with earlier revelations. This is rarely attested in the early Meccan period, but is prevalent from the middle Meccan period onwards and is most prominent in the late Meccan and Medinan periods where it is found in multiple literary contexts.

On the other hand, in the analysis of the root *w-ḥ-y* in section two, it is maintained that the principal rhetorical function of the concept of divine communication is to attest that the Messenger is a genuine prophet in keeping with earlier prophets. This is particularly evident in the middle and late Meccan periods where divine communication forms part of the Messenger's revelatory experience and shows that he is receiving revelation—through a mode of communication shared with earlier messengers—and is therefore divinely guided. The aspect of the Messenger's revelatory experience conforming to existing prophetological paradigms is also suggested in the parallel narratives of these prophetic precursors where the concept of divine communication is attested at key moments during their ministries. In the final section an explanation is offered to account for the chronological distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* with recourse to the principal

rhetorical functions identified in this chapter, which, I maintain, are indicative of the Qur'an's dynamic response to questions and doubts over its origins as well as the status of the Messenger.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is worth noting that in the above and indeed in the title of this chapter, the subject of analysis is described as the 'principal' rhetorical function. This is because, on occasion, the concept of divine sending down does exhibit other rhetorical functions: for example, in the primarily Meccan sign sections when it is stated that God sent down, more often than not, rain (usually *mā' min al-samā'*), this is to evoke God's benevolence towards mankind;[1] and in the middle and late Meccan polemics God's sovereignty over the act of sending down is one way that the Messenger is defended against accusations regarding the need for additional proofs of his prophecy.[2] However, these verses are far less attested than

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[1] For the sign verses, see early Meccan (two verses): Q 56:69; 78:14. Middle Meccan (ten verses): 15:21, 22; 20:53; 23:18; 25:48; 27:60; 35:27; 43:11; 50:9. Additionally Q 36:39 refers to the moon stations (*manāzil*). Late Meccan (19 verses): Q 6:99; 7.57; 10:24; 13:17; 14:32; 16:10, 65; 30:24, 49; 31:10; 31:34; 39:6, 21; 40:13; 41:39; 42:28; 45:5. Two verses do not refer to water in this period: Q 10:5 refers to the moon stations (*manāzil*) and in Q 42:27 God sends down 'what he wills' (*mā yashā'u*). Medinan (six verses): Q 2:22, 164; 22:5, 63; 24:43; 57:25; 65:12. Two of these verses do not refer to water: Q 57:25 states that God has sent down 'iron' (*al-ḥadīd*) and Q 65:12 refers to God's command descending (*yatanazzalu 'l-amr*). The scarcity of the sign sections in the Medinan period is well known, see, for example, Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 198. Moreover, Nöldeke considered three of the verses above as Meccan insertions (Q 2:164; 22:5-6 and 63-66), see *The history*, 145 (i/178), 172 (i/213). For the act of sending down as a sign of God's benevolence in the narrative sections, see: when God sent down *manna* and quails to the Children of Israel when He delivered them from Pharaoh (Q 7:160, 20:80); when was Moses in Madyan and in dire need he appeals to God 'to send down to me' (*anzalta ilayya*, Q 28:24); or when God sent down a garment (*libās*) upon the Children of Adam (*banū Ādam*, Q 7:26). By the Medinan period it is stated that God sent down to provide for the new community of believers, usually in the retelling of contemporary battles, e.g., in Q 48:4, 18, 26; 9:26, 40; 48:26 when he sent down divine aid (*sakīna*)—for a discussion of this noun see chapter 2—or security (*amana*, Q 3:154), water (*mā'*, Q 8:11) and angels (*al-malā'ika*, Q 3:124). It is worth noting that on the opposite end of the scale is when God sent down a punishment (*'adhab* or *rijz*) to show his wrath, although this is somewhat rare. This is can be part of an eschatological setting (Q 37:177, middle Meccan) or a retribution legend (Q 2:59, Medinan). See also the middle Meccan verse Q 36:28 where it is denied that any heavenly armies were sent down as punishment to the people of the city (*aṣḥāb al-qarya*); in this case only a single cry (*ṣayḥa*) was required to destroy them. Also the late Meccan verse Q 29:34, where it is the angels that are to send down a divine punishment from heaven (*rijz min al-samā'*) upon Lot's people (see discussion of this verse in chapter 2). Finally, Q 24:43 (Medinan), which is part of a sign passage formed of rhetorical questions, refers to God's ability to punish whom he wills by sending down hail (literally, *yunazzilu mina 'l-samā'i min jibālin fi-hā min baradin*).

[2] For the responses which underscore God's sovereignty over the act of sending down, see Q 6:37, 91 (late Meccan) and Q 15:8; 17:95 (middle Meccan). To these one can also add a handful of verses which include hypothetical scenarios where God might have condescended to send down the likes of what the opponents request, see Q 6:7-8, 111; 26:4. The accusations that the opponents level against the Messenger include: the request for the Messenger to send

those that are concerned with affirming the revelation. It might also be conceded that the principal function incorporates these rhetorical aspects: when God 'sent down' revelation it is clearly part of the continuum regarding his benevolence towards mankind and it is already explicit in the concept of 'divine' sending down that it is God who has sovereignty over the act.[3] Regarding the concept of divine communication, and as already detailed in chapter 2, there are verses where the Messenger or earlier messengers are not the recipient, for example when God communicates to the bees (Q 16:68) or the earth (Q 99:5), and occasionally there are other agents of the verb *awḥā*, such as when the devils communicate to each other (Q 6:112, 121). These exceptions, however, hardly constitute a unified rhetorical function and need not impact the analysis presented here. The focus of what follows is, hopefully justifiably, on the verses which best illustrate the principal rhetorical functions of the two concepts.

4.1 The principal rhetorical function of divine sending down

In this section it will be shown that the principal rhetorical function of divine sending down is to affirm the divine origin of the revelation with reference to the celestial event and that this event is shown to have consequences for the recitation's audience and congruity with earlier revelations. The analysis is divided between the various literary contexts wherein the analysis proceeds chronologically. The final section synthesises the findings from the individual literary contexts to enable an overview of the principal rhetorical function from a chronological perspective.

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down an angel (Q 6:8, 25:7); for God to send down angels (Q 11:12, 25:21); or why a treasure (*kanz*) has not been sent down to the Messenger (Q 11:12); or that the Messenger must send down a book upon the opponents which they can read (*tunazzila ʿalaynā kitāban naqraʾuhu*, Q 17:93). In five verses of the late Meccan period there is a question relating to why a sign (*āya*), presumably to confirm his prophethood, has not been sent down upon the Messenger, 'And they say, "Why has no sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?" (*wa-qālū law lā nuzzila ʿalayhi āyatun min rabbihi*)' (see Q 6:37, 10:20, 13:7, 27 and 29:50). There is a single verse in the Median period, Q 4:153, where the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), most likely the Medinan Jews and Christians, challenge the Messenger's veracity by asking why the Messenger has not sent down a book upon them (*tunazzila ʿalayhim kitāb*) as additional proof of his status. These verses are discussed later in the chapter. See also in this regard, Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau, 'Polemics in the Koran: The Koran's Negative Argumentation over Its Own Origin', *Arabica* 60, no. 1–2 (2013): 131–145.

[3] The link between the sending down of water and that of the revelatory message as part of God's benevolence towards mankind is well established. See, for example Wild, 'We have sent down', 142–43. For the divine sovereignty of the act see the discussion in chapter 1.

4.1.1 Revelation affirmations

There are only three 'revelation affirmations' which include the root *n-z-l* in the early Meccan period.[4] It is, however, well attested in the latter periods: 16 verses in the middle Meccan, 22 verses in the late Meccan and 18 in the Medinan.[5] In the vast majority of these verses the divine origin is assured with reference to the celestial event whereby the revelation was sent down, for example, in the early Meccan verse Q 97:1 'Indeed we sent it down during the Night of Decree (*innā anzalnāhu fī laylati 'l-qadri*). On occasion the divine origin is affirmed with reference to the heavenly agent, such as in the middle Meccan verses Q 26:193-4, which state that the Trustworthy Spirit brought the revelation (*nazala bi-hi 'l-rūḥu 'l-amīnu*) upon the Messenger's heart, and later in the same sura any possible satanic origin for the revelations is dismissed when it is denied that the devils have brought it down (*mā tanazzalat bi-hi 'l-shayāṭīnu*, Q 26:210).[6]

Although the way that the celestial event is depicted never stabilises completely during the course of the proclamations, as references to the recitation (*al-qurʾān*) or the reminder (*al-dhikr*) as being 'sent down' persist in all chronological periods,[7] by the late Meccan period the central image is that of the celestial source book, *kitāb* (usually with the definite article): 18 out of the 22 revelation affirmations

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[4] See, Q 56:80; 69:43; 97:1.

[5] Middle Meccan: Q 15:9; 17:82, 105, 106; 20:2, 4, 113; 21:10, 21:50; 26:192, 193, 210; 36:5; 38:29; 44:3; 76:23. Late Meccan: Q 6:92, 114; 7:2; 12:2; 13:1; 14:1; 16:44, 64, 89; 29:47; 32:2; 39:1, 2, 23, 41; 40:2; 41:2, 42; 42:17; 45:2; 46:2, 30. Medinan: Q 2:97, 99, 176, 213; 3:3, 4, 7; 4:105, 166, 174; 5:48; 22:16; 24:1, 34, 46; 57:25; 59:21, 65:10.

[6] See also the Medinan verse, Q 2:97, which mentions Gabriel as the heavenly agent. On Q 26, see Zwettler's study where he argues that the primary purpose of the sura is to underscore the authority of the Qur'anic proclamations by contrasting the divine source of the Qur'an with the demonic sources of other forms of mantic speech in 'A mantic manifesto: the sūra of the "The Poets" and the Qurʾānic foundations of prophetic authority', in *Poetry and prophecy: the beginnings of a literary tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 75–119.

[7] For references to *al-qurʾān* as part of the celestial event, see e.g., middle Meccan: Q 17:82, 20:2 and 76:23; Medinan: Q 59:21. For *al-dhikr*, see e.g., middle Meccan: Q 15:9 and 21:50; late Meccan: Q 16:44. In multiple other verses there are free-floating accusative suffixes (e.g., Q 97:1) and relative pronouns (e.g., Q 5:48), etc. See the detailed discussion of the objects of the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* in chapter 1.

refer to the celestial source book.[8] This also continues into the Medinan period.[9] The move towards the celestial source book as the central image of the celestial event in the revelation affirmations is not to be seen as coincidental but is likely part of a wider Qur'anic strategy whereby the notion of the celestial source book imbues the revelation with a kind of scriptural glow associated with earlier scriptural canons.[10] It is also noteworthy that the concept of divine sending down is prevalent in many of the introductory revelation affirmations of, particularly, the late Meccan period.[11] Whether these incipits announce excerpts from the celestial source book, as Neuwirth has maintained, remains open to doubt, although it is clear that they serve to rank what follows as divine revelation and that the concept of divine sending down plays a significant role in these verses.[12]

Another feature of the revelation affirmations with the root *n-z-l* is that the vast majority detail the consequences of the celestial event by linking it to the various roles of the Messenger and to the audience of the recitations. This is, however, not the case in the three revelation affirmations of the early Meccan period. In these verses the revelation is affirmed in an absolute sense, for instance, in Q 69:43 the affirmation that the revelation is a 'a sending down (*tanzīlun*) from the Lord of all Being' includes no mention of the Messenger or the consequences of the 'sending down'.[13] Rather, it is merely a corrective to the misunderstanding that the revelation

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[8] The references to the celestial source book are as follows: *al-kitāb* is the direct object of the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala* in seven verses: Q 6:114; 16:64, 89; 29:47; 39:2; 39:41; 42:17. Five verses include the genitive construction '*tanzīlu 'l-kitābi*', see Q 39:1; 40:2; 45:2; 46:2. Q 41:2 is very similar but lacks a reference to the book 'A sending down from the Merciful, the Compassionate (*tanzīlun mina 'l-raḥmāni 'l-raḥīmi*), although we might envisage that it is implied, as Neuwirth has observed. See, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 253. The indefinite *kitāb*, which I also take to usually refer to the celestial source, is also prevalent: it is the direct object of the verb *nazzala* in Q 39:23; the referent for an accusative suffix in Q 6:92 and 14:1 and the subject of the passive verb *unzila* in Q 7:2. In Q 46:30, the passive verb *unzila* begins an adjectival sentence describing a book (*kitāb*).

[9] See for example, Q 2:176, 213, 3:3, 7, 4:105, 5:48, 57:25 where *al-kitāb* is the direct object of either the verbs *nazzala* or *anzala*.

[10] See Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 114–16.

[11] Some 10 out of the 16 suras which include introductory revelation affirmations in the late Meccan period include references to the celestial event: see Q 7:2, 12:2, 13:1, 14:1, 32:2, 39:1-2, 40:2, 41:2, 45:2, 46:2. The other suras with revelation affirmations are: Q 10, 11, 28, 31, and 42. For a form-critical overview of these revelation affirmations, see Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 250–55.

[12] See Neuwirth, 'From Recitation through Liturgy to Canon', esp., 149-150 and also the discussion in chapter 1 regarding Neuwirth's pericope theory. For an insightful general comment on these introductions see Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 98-99 (i/119-120).

[13] See also the remaining two revelation affirmations of the early Meccan period, Q 97:1 and 56:80, which are of the abstract type as outlined above.

is the speech of a poet (*shāʿir*) or soothsayer (*kāhin*) in the preceding verses 41-42.[14] By the middle Meccan period, however, the consequences of the celestial event are usually detailed. In three verses the reference to the revelation as being 'sent down' is followed by a subordinate clause introduced by the subjunctive particle *li-*, which introduces the intention of the agent or the purpose for which a thing is done.[15] Two of these verses relate the celestial event with the Messenger's roles: it is so he can warn a people (*li-tundhira qawman*, Q 36:5-6) or be one of the warners (*li-takūna mina 'l-mundhirīna*, Q 26:193-194). In Q 38:29 the intention is directly related to the audience where it is stated that a book (*kitāb*), most likely referring to the celestial source, has been sent down to the Messenger so that its verses can be pondered and so it arouses remembrance in men of understanding (*li-yaddabbarū āyātihi wa-li-yatadhakkara ūlū 'l-albābi*). The celestial event is also linked to the audience by describing the revelation's function: it is a reminder (*dhikr*, Q 20:2-3, 113, 21:10, 50) or a healing and a mercy for the believers (Q 17:82).

This feature becomes more prominent in the late Meccan period where some 16 out of the 22 verses describe the utility of the celestial event.[16] In several of these

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[14] The exact reason why the Qur'anic proclamations were charged as such remains open to debate—the charge of it being the speech of a *kāhin* is perhaps more comprehensible due to the apparent similarly between the Qur'anic utterances, particularly in the early suras, and the rhyming *sajʿ* of the pre-Islamic soothsayer; whereas the poetry reference is more obscure because of the lack—although not total absence of—formal resemblances between the Qur'an and early Islamic poetry. It might also be related, of course, to the fact that the poets were thought of as 'inspired' by spirits in pre-Islamic Arabic. Zwettler has put forward another possible explanation relating to the fact that both corpora were likely delivered in the poetic *koine* of pre-Islamic Arabia: inflected Arabic. See, Michael Zwettler, *The oral tradition of classical Arabic poetry: its character and implications* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978), 156–70. Recent scholarship, however, emphasises the possibility that the Qur'an does not in fact represent inflected Arabic, see Marijn van Putten and Philip Stokes, 'Case in the Qurʾānic Consonantal Text', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 108 (2018): 143–79; Marijn van Putten, 'The Feminine Ending -at as a Diptote in the Qurʾānic Consonantal Text and Its Implications for Proto-Arabic and Proto-Semitic', *Arabica* 64, no. 5–6 (2017): 695–705. On the question of *sajʿ*, see Devin J. Stewart, 'Sajʿ in the Qurʾān: Prosody and Structure', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 2 (1990): 101–139; although whether the *sajʿ* sayings found in Islamic literature represents *kuhhān* speech remains a different question entirely. On the formal resemblances between the Qur'an and pre-Islamic poetry, see Hämeen-Anttila, 'Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry'; and also Hämeen-Anttila, 'Al-Khansā''s Poem in -Ālahā and Its Qur'ānic Echoes. The Long and the Short of It' which shows that rhyme and rhythm is also shared between the Qur'an and poetry (although they are not identical).

[15] On this particle see Wright, *Grammar*, I: 290 and II: 28.

[16] Five of the six verses which include no reference to the consequences of the celestial event are the introductory verses formed of nominal sentences beginning with the genitive construction '*tanzīlu 'l-kitābi*': Q 39:1; 40:2; 45:2; 46:2 and Q 41:2 although lacking the

verses the reference to the celestial event is followed by subordinate clauses which detail the consequences of the sending down for the audience of the recitations through the Messenger's role: he is instructed to warn and remind 'the believers' (*al-muʾminūna*, Q 7:2) or 'the Mother of Cities' (*umm al-qurā*) and those around her' (Q 6:92);[17] to bring 'the people' (*al-nās*) forth from the shadows (Q 14:1) or to make things clear to them (Q 16:44) or 'the associators' (Q 16:64);[18] while Q 39:2 details that the Messenger should worship God, implicitly forming a paraenetic appeal to the believer.[19] Other verses link the celestial event with the audience of the recitations through its function: it is for mankind (Q 39:41); to make everything clear as a guidance (Q 16:89); and to confirm what came before it and to guide to a straight path (Q 46:30). The remaining verses link the celestial event to the audience in a more diffuse manner by describing how the revelation will affect the believers physically (Q 39:23), or by commenting on the unbelief of most of mankind (*akthar al-nās*, Q 13:1) and the unbelievers (Q 29:47), or issuing a threat to those who disbelieve in the Reminder (*al-dhikr*, Q 41:41-42). Two verses include polemical questions addressed to the audience regarding their knowledge and understanding of the revelation (Q 42:17 and Q 12:2) and in Q 6:114 the celestial event is linked directly to the audience because the book is said to be sent down to them (*wa-huwa 'lladhī anzala 'l-kitāba ilaykum*).

The import of the celestial event continues to be emphasised in the revelation affirmations of the Medinan period, while the congruity of sending down with earlier revelations is also evident. In three verses the celestial event is linked directly to the audience by speaking of what has been sent down to them (*ilaykum*).[20] Other verses refer to the function of the revelation as a guidance and a reminder for mankind,

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collocation *al-kitāb*. See also, Q 32:2 which is of the absolute type, 'The sending down of the Book (*tanzīlu 'l-kitābi*) about which there is no doubt from the Lord of the worlds'.

[17] The exact reference for *umm al-qurā* 'Mother Cities' remains obscure, although it is probably a reference to Mecca, see Wild, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 147. Bell, however considered it as a reference to Medina, see *A commentary on the Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991), 198; *A commentary on the Qur'ān*, 1991, 2:224.

[18] The 'associators' are not named specifically in this verse, rather, there is the 3rd person plural suffix 'them' (*hum*). From the context it appears that the referent is those who associate with their Lord detailed in Q 16:54.

[19] For the notion of individual first person addresses occasionally best interpreted as referring to not only the Messenger but the believer in general see Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, 2007, 196; Gustav Richter, *Der Sprachstil des Koran* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1940), 25.

[20] See Q 4:174; 24:34 and 65:10.

believers and unbelievers;[21] while more still refer to the belief or disbelief in the celestial source book (*al-kitāb*, Q 2:176 and Q 3:7) and how it is only the ungodly who disbelieve in the 'clear signs' which have been sent down (*āyāt bayyināt*, Q 2:99). There is an addition of an important subordinate clause in the Medinan period relating to the Messenger's authority to judge in Q 4:105, 'Surely We have sent down to thee the Book with the truth, so that thou mayest judge between the people by that God has shown thee (*innā anzalnā ilayka 'l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi li-taḥkuma bayna 'l-nāsi bi-mā arāka 'llāhu*)'. The consequences of the celestial act are made particularly explicit here: it is so the Messenger can judge between 'the people'—here likely referring to the Medinan community. This in turn shows that his judgement is based upon the revelation; something that is met again in the 'regulations' formal type which is considered in the final part of this analysis. The congruity of the sending down with earlier revelations is also made clear in Q 3:3 where the purpose for the sending down of the book (*al-kitāb*) is to 'confirm what came before it (*muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayhi*)', which is undoubtedly referring to the Torah and Gospel which are also explicitly stated as 'sent down' (*anzala*) in this verse.[22]

As has been shown, in the revelation affirmations the divine origin of the revelation is affirmed with reference to the celestial event. These verses are rarely attested in the early Meccan period and it is from the middle Meccan period onwards that they are most prevalent. Although the image of the celestial event retains some fluidity, by the late Meccan and into the Medinan period the predominant image of the celestial event is the celestial source book. From the middle Meccan period onwards, the consequences of the celestial event are evident when it is linked to the Messenger's role, the revelation's function or the audience directly. This culminates in the Medinan period where it is stated that the celestial source book has been sent down so that the Messenger can judge.

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[21] For guidance see Q 2:97, 3:3-4, 22:16, 24:46. For remembrance, see Q 24:1.

[22] The phrase *mā bayna yadayhi* does not necessarily need to be understood as temporal as indicated here, but could refer to what is 'before', as in the presence of, the Messenger. This reading, however, seem less likely. For the same claim regarding confirmation of what came before, see e.g., Q 2:41, 101; 6:92.

4.1.2 Polemics

In the 'polemical' sections the concept of divine sending down affirms the divine origin of the revelation in light of charges made against the Messenger by the Meccans—described as 'the Associators' (*al-mushrikūn*, *alladhīna ashrakū*) and 'the Unbelievers' (*al-kāfirūn*, *alladhīna kafarū*).[23] Such verses are quite rare and limited to the middle and late Meccan periods. By the Medinan period, which accounts for over half of the total polemical verses with the root *n-z-l*,[24] the focus has shifted to the reception of the revelation itself or more accurately to the continued denial of it—particularly by Jews and Christians and/or the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*).[25] While some of these verses are part of debates between the Messenger and his opponents, the majority are polemics against, most commonly, the aforementioned. In these verses the revelation is affirmed with regard to the celestial event, and more often than not, the act of sending down is shown to be contiguous with earlier revelations while the import of the celestial event is underscored when it is juxtaposed against the continued denial of the revelation by the opponents.

There is a single verse in the middle Meccan period where the *qul* ('say') response to a series of accusations made by 'the unbelievers' regarding the origin of the Messenger's revelation affirms its divine origin by referencing the celestial event, in Q 25:4-6:

> 4 The unbelievers say, "This is naught but a lie he has forged, and other folk have helped him to it (*hādhā ilā ifkun iftarāhu wa-aʿānāhu ʿalayhi qawmun ākharūna*)." So they have committed wrong and falsehood.
> 5 They say, "Fairy-tales of the ancients that he has had written down, so that they are recited to him (*tumlā ʿalayhi*) at the dawn and in the evening."
> 6 Say: "He sent it down, who knows the secret in the heavens and earth (*qul anzalahu 'lladhī yaʿlamu 'l-sirra fī 'l-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi*); He is All-forgiving, All-compassionate."

In the late Meccan period, there are three similar verses which are all responses regarding the accusation that the Messenger is a forger (*muftar)*. The

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[23] On the meanings of these terms see Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam*, 1999, 48–50.
[24] Some 39 of the 77 polemic verses. For a full list of verses please refer to Appendix I.
[25] There are five verses which include a reference to the People of the Book, see Q 2:105; 3:65, 72, 199; 4:153; 5:59. The context of the majority of the remaining verses indicate that the object of the polemics are either Jews (e.g., Q 2:91, 101, 5:66) or less commonly Christians (e.g., Q 5:83). See the discussion that follows.

response to this charge from unnamed opponents in Q 16:101-2 is to affirm the divine origin of the revelation by naming the heavenly agent, 'Say: "The Holy Spirit sent it down from thy Lord in truth (*qul nazzalahu rūḥu 'l-qudusi min rabbika bi-l-ḥaqqi*), and to confirm those who believe, and to be a guidance and good tidings to those who surrender." The same accusation resurfaces in Q 11:13, which likely originates from the Meccans given that Q 11:12 mentions the need for a treasure or angel to be sent down, to which the response includes the challenge to the opponents to bring ten suras like the revelation (*bi-ʿashri suwarin mithlihi*).[26] Verse 14 details the possible outcome of the challenge, i.e., failure, which in turn proves the authenticity of the revelation and thus it is assured that it has been 'sent down with God's knowledge (*annamā unzila bi-ʿilmi 'llāhi*)…'. The celestial event, then, is indicative here of its divine origin.

By the Medinan period, which accounts for some 39 of the polemical verses with the root *n-z-l*, the subject has undoubtedly shifted from the Messenger and the origin of the revelation to the reception of the revelation itself. In the vast majority of these verses the celestial event affirms the divine origin of the revelation as well as the congruity of the act with earlier revelations.[27] Its import is also evident as it is juxtaposed against the denial of the revelation by the opponents. Several verses are

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[26] For other verses referring to the need for an angel to be sent down, see e.g., Q 6:8; 25:7; Q 25:21. On the supposed 'Qur'anic pagans' and their expectations regarding an angelic messenger see, Patricia Crone, 'Angels verses Humans as Messengers of God: The View of the Qurʾānic Pagans', in *Revelation, literature, and community in late antiquity*, ed. Philippa Lois Townsend and Moulie Vidas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 315–36; Gerald Hawting, '"Has God Sent a Mortal as a Messenger?" (Q 17:95): Messengers and Angels in the Qur'ān', in *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context 2* (Routledge, 2011), 372–89. On the Qur'anic pagans more generally, see Patricia Crone, 'The Religion of the Qur'ānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities', *Arabica* 57, no. 2 (2010): 151–200; Patricia Crone, 'The Quranic Mushrikūn and the resurrection (Part I)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 3 (2012): 445–472 and part II 77, no. 1 (2013): 1–20; Gerard Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Montgomery Watt, 'Belief in a "High God" in pre-Islamic Mecca', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 16 (1971): 35. See also the overview in Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 65–69.

[27] There are five exceptions which do not refer to the celestial event: Q 2:57, which is part of a lengthy 1st person address to Jews, which refers to the *manna* and quails that God sent down to the Jews during their exodus from Egypt and verse 59 which refers to God's wrath being sent down most likely upon Pharaoh and his people; Q 2:102 is part of a section about a 'party of those who were given the Book' and refers somewhat ambiguously to 'what was sent down upon Babylon's two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt', and verse 105 talks of the 'People of the Book' and the 'associators' as wishing that no good of the Lord had been 'sent down' to the Messenger; and Q 3:151 refers to the unbelievers and denies that God has sent down any authority (*sulṭān*) for association.

part of debates and recall the reasons for rejecting the revelation. Two verses refer to the Jews' rejection of the revelation: they only believe in what was 'sent down' to them (*unzila ilaynā*, Q 2:91), which seems to indicate the congruity of the act with earlier revelations; or they say 'believe in what has been sent down' (*āminū bi-lladhī unzila*)' but reject it by the end of the day (Q 3:72). In other verses various unnamed opponents give reasons for not believing in the revelation: they will do what their fathers do and will not come to what 'God has sent down' (*mā anzala 'llāhu*, Q 2:170, 5:104)[28] or they will only obey certain parts (Q 47:26); or they deny that when a '*sūra*'—that is in some sense a portion of the revelation—is 'sent down' it increases belief (Q 9:124), or they simply turn away from it (Q 9:127). There are two verses which include the objections of, most likely, believers from the emerging community, who deny or question that a *sūra* has been sent down which requires the believers to fight (Q 9:86 and 47:20).

Other verses which form sections of polemical tracts or include polemical questions addressed to the audience similarly juxtapose the celestial event against the denial of the revelation thus affirming both the divine origin of the revelation and its import. For example, the hypocrites (*al-munāfiqūn*, Q 4:61) will not come to what 'God has sent down' (*taʿālaw ilā mā anzala 'llāhu*)' and Q 9:64 recalls their fear of a '*sūra*' being sent down that might expose what is in their hearts. Q 9:97 refers to the Bedouins as ignorant of what 'God has sent down on His Messenger (*mā anzala 'llāhu ʿalā rasūlihi*)'. Q 2:23 includes the challenge, already known from the late Meccan period, to bring a *sūra* like the revelation if the opponents are in doubt about God has sent down (*mimmā anzalnā*, Q 2:23) and in Q 57:16 a question addressed to the audience is that is it not time that they humble to God's Reminder (*dhikr Allāh*) and to 'that which He sent down of the truth (*mā anzala mina 'l-ḥaqqi*, Q 57:16)'.

In the various responses to the rejection of the revelation its divine origin is affirmed by referring to the celestial event, while its congruity with earlier revelations is also attested as well as the necessity to believe in what has already been sent down. In Q 2:135 there is an assertion from unnamed opponents, presumably Christians and Jews, that to be rightly guided one must be a Jew or Christian. The first part of the response, in the form of a *qul* directive, states that the religion of Abraham (*millat Ibrāhīm*) is sufficient as he was a pure monotheist

[28] See also Q 22:71 which speaks of the opponents in the 3rd person and includes the same charge.

(*ḥanīf*).[29] The suggested response continues in Q 2:136, although this time and somewhat unusually the imperative statement is given in the plural form (*qūlū*), and affirms the necessity of belief in not only what God has sent down to the believers, but to earlier prophets also, 'Say you: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down on us and sent down on (*wa-mā unzila ilaynā wa-mā unzila ilā*) Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender'. An almost identical response is given in Q 3:84, but in this verse it is a *qul* directive in the singular and adduced as a rebuttal to those who seek other religions (verse 83). Another *qul* directive in Q 5:59, which follows a verse describing the People of the Book as mocking or making fun of prayer, tells the Messenger to affirm belief in 'what was sent down to us and what was sent down before (*mā unzila ilaynā wa-mā unzila min qablu*)'.

Similar statements regarding the congruity of the act and the necessity to believe in not only the Qur'anic proclamations but those before it are found in verses which are addressed directly to Jews, Christians or the emerging believers. In Q 2:41, the Jews are told to 'believe in what I [God] have sent down (*bi-mā anzaltu*), confirming that which is with you, and be not the first to disbelieve in it' and in Q 5:83, it is the Christians who recognise the truth of what has been 'sent down to the Messenger' (*mā unzila ilā 'l-rasūli*). Q 3:199, which is likely addressing the new believers, speaks of some of the People of the Book as believing in both what has been 'sent down' to the new believers (*unzila ilaykum*) as well as what has been 'sent down' unto them (*unzila ilayhim*). Finally, three verses speak of the promises of reward in the afterlife made to those 'who believe in what has been sent down to thee and what has been sent down before thee (*bi-mā unzila ilayka wa-mā unzila min qablika*, Q 2:4)' and similarly there is a 'mighty wage' for those who believe in what God sent down to the Messenger (*anzala*, Q 4:162) and 'success' for those who follow the light (*al-nūr*) which was sent down with the Messenger (Q 7:157).

The congruity of the sending down of revelation with regard to earlier scriptures is also shown in the polemical tracts of the Medinan period. Several of these are directed against the People of the Book who are charged with concealing

[29] For a convenient overview regarding the meaning of the word *ḥanīf*, see *EQ*, s.v. 'Ḥanīf' (Rubin).

part of the Book (*al-kitāb*) that God has sent down (Q 2:159, 174),[30] denying what has been 'sent down' to them (*mā unzila ilayhim* Q 5:66) or to the Messenger (*mā unzila ilayhi*, Q 5:88), or disputing regarding Abraham in spite of the fact that both the Torah and the Gospel were 'sent down' after him (*mā unzilati 'l-Tawrātu wa-l-Injīlu illā min baʿdihi*, Q 3:65). Polemical questions addressed to the audience also allude to this, for example, Q 4:60 asks why they assert that they believe in what has been 'sent down to thee and before thee' (*bi-mā unzila ilayka wa-mā unzila min qablika*) and yet they still desire to take idols.

As has been shown, the concept of divine sending down in the polemical sections affirms the revelation against specific charges related to the origin of the revelation, although this is quite rare and only attested in the middle and late Meccan period. By the Medinan period the subject of the polemical sections which include the root *n-z-l* is the continued denial of the revelation by, primarily, the People of the Book, Christians and Jews. In these sections the reference to the celestial event assures the divine origin of the Qur'anic revelation, while also its import is shown as it is often juxtaposed against their denial of the revelation and implicitly rebuttals it—by being 'sent down' by God the revelation should be accepted. In many verses the congruity of the act of sending down is attested, as well as the necessity to believe in the Qur'anic revelations and what has been 'sent down' before, when either responding directly to the denial of the revelation or in the polemical tracts against those who are denying the revelation.

4.1.3 Other formal types

The principal function of divine sending down is attested in other formal contexts which were categorised in the 'Miscellaneous' section in Table 3.5 of chapter 3. There are 'Messenger addresses', 'appeals' and 'regulations'. In the 'Messenger addresses' of the late Meccan and Medinan periods, where the Messenger is instructed to speak in *qul* 'say' directives, the import of the celestial event for the audience is evident. In these verses the Messenger is told to instruct the audience to follow the best of what has been 'sent down to you ' (*unzila ilaykum*, Q 39:55), to consider the provision that 'God has sent down' (*anzala 'llāhu*, Q 10:59), to ask the

[30] For similar charges regarding the Jews see Q 2:42, 140, 146, 3:71, 187 and 5:15, all of which are Medinan.

People of Book to perform the Torah, the Gospel and 'what was sent down to you from your Lord' (*mā unzila ilaykum min rabbikum*, Q 5:68) and to attest that he believes 'in what God sent down of a book' (*bi-mā anzala 'llāhu min kitābin*, Q 42:15). In Q 5:49 the Messenger is instructed to judge (*uḥkum*) between them, referring to Jews and Christians, 'by what God has sent down' (*bi-mā anzala 'llāhu*), and in Q 5:67 he is instructed to 'proclaim what has been sent down from your Lord (*balligh mā unzila ilayka min rabbika*)'. Of a similar type to these verses, although lacking the Messenger intermediary, are several direct appeals made to the audience by the divine speaker in the late Meccan and Medinan periods when the audience is told to follow (*ittabiʿū*) what has been 'sent down' or to believe (*āminū*) in it.[31] In the late Meccan verse, Q 29:46, there is an appeal to moral behaviour when the audience to told to 'not dispute with the People of the Book (*lā tujādilū ahla 'l-kitābi*)'. This is followed by a plural *qul* directive attesting to their belief in not only the Qur'anic revelation but those before it, which also emphasises the congruity of the act of sending down as we have seen in other verses, 'Say, "We believe in that which was sent down to us and has been sent down to you [i.e., the People of the Book] (*qūlū āmannā bi-lladhī unzila ilaynā wa-unzila ilaykum*)…"'

The concept of divine sending down is found in the 'regulations' formal type which are concerned with formal proscriptions. In these verses the proscriptions are shown as being based on what has been 'sent down' thus assuring their authority and divine status while also showing the import of the celestial event. In Q 2:231 after several regulations regarding divorced women there is an appeal made in the 1st person plural to not take God's signs (*āyāt Allāh*) in mockery. This is followed by an affirmation of the divine origin of the proscriptions which underlines the import of celestial event for the audience as it is addressed directly to them, 'remember God's blessing upon you, and the Book and the Wisdom He has sent down on you , to admonish you (*wa-mā anzala ʿalaykum mina 'l-kitābi wa-l-ḥikmati ʿalaykum yaʿiẓukum bi-hi*)'. Similarly, Q 2:185 states that the recitation was sent down in the month of Ramadan as a guidance to the people (*unzila fīhi 'l-qurʾānu hudan li-l-nāsi*) which is then followed by a subjunctive clause detailing the proscriptions for fasting.

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[31] For follow imperative, see the late Meccan verses: Q 6:155; 7:3 and 31:21. For the believe imperative, see the Medina verses: Q 4:47, 136; and 64:8.

Other verses detail prescriptions regarding war booty (Q 8:41) or divorced women (Q 65:1-5) and are followed by statements regarding the necessity to believe in what has been 'sent down' or in the latter case with a straight forward affirmation stating 'that is God's command that He has sent down to you (*dhālika amru 'llāhi anzalahu ilaykum*, Q 65:5)'. In Q 5:44-48 it is stated that judgement itself is to be based upon what has been 'sent down' and that this is congruous with earlier revelations. Q 5:44 details that God sent down the Torah (*innā anzalnā 'l-Tawrāta*) by which the prophets (*al-nabiyyūna*) judged the Jews.[32] The Gospel, which also confirms the Torah (Q 5:46), is appropriate for the judgement of the people of the Gospel, if they judge by what has been sent down therein (*wa-l-yaḥkum ahlu 'l-Injīli bi-mā anzala 'llāhu fīhi*, Q 5:47). Finally, Q 5:48 includes an affirmation that the book has been sent down confirming what came before it (*wa-anzalnā ʿalayka 'l-kitāba muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayhi*) and details that the Messenger should 'judge between them by what has been sent down' (*fa-'ḥkum baynahum bi-mā anzala 'llāhu*'), a phrase which is repeated again in the following 'Messenger address' verse, Q 5:49, which was discussed above. The referent for the 3rd person plural pronominal suffix *-hum*, is clear from the preceding verses and is referring to the judgement of the Christians and Jews. Concluding statements in three of the verses again attest that judgement must be based upon what has been 'sent down' but details that 'Whoso judges not according to what God has sent down (*wa-man lam yaḥkum bi-mā anzala 'llāhu*)' are either the unbelievers (*al-kāfirūn*, Q 5:44), evildoers (*al-ẓālimūn*, Q 5:45) or the ungodly (*al-fāsiqūn*, Q 5:47). These verses are clearly emphasising the divine origin of the regulatory proscriptions by referring to the celestial event.[33]

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[32] Similarly, Q 3:93 which deals with dietary laws which the Children of Israel followed before 'the Torah was sent down (*min qabli an tunazzala 'l-Tawrātu*)'.

[33] Cf. Sinai who has recently interpreted these verses, especially Q 5:48-49, as positing an 'intimate nexus between Muhammad's ability to act as an arbiter and his *receipt* of divine revelations' (my italics). One has to again point to the central thesis of chapter 1—that the root *n-z-l* does not refer to disclosure but to a specific and meaningful celestial event. If Q 5:48-49 are considered against the other verses described above, it is possible to see that the verbal instances of the root *n-z-l* either do not have a patient and importantly, in Q 2:231 and Q 65:5, the patient is not the Messenger himself but the audience, '*ilaykum*'. The point of reiterating that the proscriptions have been 'sent down' is not to stress the Messenger's 'access to revelatory knowledge' as this would equally mean that in Q 2:231 and 65:5 the audience's access to revelatory knowledge is being emphasised—but more likely to show the divine origin of the proscriptions themselves and thus the necessity that they be adhered to. See 'Muḥammad as an Episcopal Figure', *Arabica* 65 (2018): 12–14.

4.1.3 Conclusion

In the preceding sections I have argued that the principal rhetorical function of divine sending down is to affirm the divine origin of the revelation by referring to the celestial event, an event that has significant consequences for the audience of the recitations and is congruous with earlier revelations. In the early Meccan period this is quite rare, and the three 'revelation affirmations' refer solely to the celestial event without any recourse to its consequences. By the middle Meccan period there is a marked increase in the number of 'revelation affirmations' which reference the celestial event and detail the consequence of the act by linking it to the roles of the Messenger or directly to the audience of the revelations. It is in the late Meccan and Medinan period that the rhetorical function is particularly prevalent, and all of its features come to fruition. This is shown in the many 'revelation affirmations' which now not only detail the consequences of the celestial event, but also reference its congruity with earlier revelations. In the 'polemical' sections, particularly of the Medinan period which account for over half of the total polemical verses with the root *n-z-l*, the celestial event affirms the revelation against the accusations of the opponents wherein the congruity of the act is also stated. It is also part of polemical tracts against the continued denial of the revelation by, primarily, the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, which demonstrates the import of the celestial event by juxtaposing it against their denial. Finally, the principal rhetorical function is also evident in the late Meccan and Medinan 'Messenger addresses' where the Messenger is consoled by affirmations of the divine origin of the revelation, the 'direct appeals' made to the audience to follow or believe in what has been 'sent down' to them, and in the 'regulations' verses, of primarily the Medinan period, where the divine origin of the proscriptions is assured with reference to the celestial event. It is also at this time that the central image of the celestial event is that of the celestial source book, *al-kitāb*, which is best understood to offer a scriptural dimension to the otherwise oral nature of the Qur'anic proclamations.

4.2 The principal rhetorical function of divine communication

This section will demonstrate that the principal rhetorical function of divine communication is to attest that the Messenger is receiving revelation and to certify his position as a genuine prophet in line with earlier messengers. It is thus primarily concerned with the status of the Messenger as opposed to the message itself. It will follow the same scheme as the previous section, only here analysing the literary contexts in which the root *w-ḥ-y* appears, before drawing the data together in a concluding section.

4.2.1 Messenger addresses

The middle and late Meccan periods account for the majority of the 'Messenger addresses' which include the root *w-ḥ-y* with 12 verses attested in the former and 14 in the latter, out of the total 28 verses of this type.[34] There are two verses attested in the Medinan period.[35] In all of the Messenger addresses the concept of divine communication is closely linked to the Messenger and certifies that he is receiving revelations. By the late Meccan and Medinan period it is affirmed that the specific mode of divine communication is in harmony with earlier messengers.

The verses in this formal type are concerned with the Messenger's behaviour and experiences wherein the concept of divine communication indicates that the Messenger is receiving revelation and acting under divine guidance. When the Messenger is instructed to recite, this is dependent upon him first receiving a divine communication. Q 18:27 begins with the imperative to recite what has been communicated to him of the celestial source book (*al-kitāb*) and stresses that the communication is unchangeable, 'Recite what has been communicated to thee of the Book of thy Lord; no man can change His words' (*wa-'tlu mā ūḥiya ilayka min kitābi rabbika lā mubaddila li-kalimātihi*).[36] Similarly, in Q 20:114 the Messenger is told not to rush with the recitation (*al-qurʾān*) until its communication (*waḥyuhu*) is

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[34] Middle Meccan (12): Q 17:73, 86;18:27, 110; 20:114, 21.7, 25, 45, 108; 38:70; 43:43; 72:1. Late Meccan (14): Q 6:19, 106, 112, 145; 10:109; 11:12; 12:109; 13:30; 16:43, 123; 29:45; 39:65; 42:13; 42:3.
[35] Q 4:163; 33:2.
[36] See also the late Meccan Q 13:30 and Q 29:45 which concludes with a directive to prayer and also references the celestial source book, *al-kitāb*, as the source of the communication.

complete. The divine speaker also instructs the Messenger to steadfastness where he is told to follow what has been communicated to him (*ittabiʿ mā ūḥiya ilayka*, Q 6:106, 10:109) or to adhere by it (*fa-stamsik bi-lladhī ūḥiya ilayka*, Q 43:43).[37] There are also several *qul* directives where the Messenger is told to announce that he has received a divine communication thus reiterating that he is acting under divine guidance.[38] These announcements refer to various statements: they can refer to monotheistic creeds such as Q 18:110, 'Say: "I am only a mortal the like of you; it is communicated to me that your God is One God (*yūḥā ilayya annamā ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥidun*)….'; [39] his knowledge of the unseen world when it was communicated to him (*ūḥiya*) that a group of *jinn* listened to the recitation (*al-qurʾān*) and that they believed in it; [40] or even the revelation itself in a wider sense, as in Q 6:19 where he is told to announce that it is 'this recitation that has been communicated to me' (*wa ūḥiya ilayya hādhā 'l-qurʾānu*).[41] Q 38:67-70 is particularly telling because it contrasts what the Messenger has no knowledge of against the knowledge that is imparted to him by divine communication, here referring to his prophetic role:

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[37] See also, the Medinan Q 33:2 and the late Meccan Q 16:123, where it is communicated to the Messenger to follow the religion of Abraham (*awḥaynā ilayka ani 'ttabiʾ millata Ibrāhīma*). Nöldeke considered this verse a possible Medinan addition because the emerging religion is considered to be the same as the religion of Abraham (*millat Ibrāhīm*), see *The history*, 119 (i/145). Against this observation one might counter that, as we have seen, the root *w-ḥ-y* is most attested in the middle and late Meccan period and almost entirety absent from the Medinan. Therefore, it is perhaps unlikely that a verse which includes a primarily Meccan term might originate from the Medinan period where it is rarely attested.

[38] These *qul* 'say' directives differ from the polemical verses in that they are not specifically answering opposing questions and charges of the opponents and are not part of a 'they say…. say' series of verses. They are rather 'say' directives that appear not to be parts of debates between the Messenger and the opponents and are therefore included here as part of God's personal addresses with the Messenger. Welch also recognised these two types of 'say' directives, see *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'al-Ḳurʾān'.

[39] See also Q 21:108.

[40] The fact that the *jinn* are affirming the veracity of the revelation in this verse is intriguing. For similar notions of the *jinn/shayṭān* attempting to listen to the revelation, see Q 15:17–18; 37:6–10; 72:8–9. Gerald Hawting discussed the notion of the barring of *jinn* listening in and its possible origins and argued that this is a way of assuring the divine as opposed to satanic origin of the revelation, see 'Eavesdropping on the heavenly assembly'. Hawting, however, pays little attention to this verse and the positive aspect of the *jinn* hearing the revelation and attesting their belief in it. He does, however, mention the verse in passing in a footnote, see 24, fn. 1.

[41] See also Q 6:145, where the Messenger declares that he finds nothing forbidden in what has been communicated to him (*qul lā ajidu fī mā ūḥiya ilayya*).

67 Say: "It is a mighty tiding
68 from which you are turning away.
69 I had no knowledge of the High Council (*bi-l-malaʾi ʻl-aʿlā*) when they disputed.
70 This alone is communicated to me, that I am only a clear warner (*in yūḥā ilayya illā annamā anā nadhīrun mubīnun*)."[42]

The concept of divine communication also features in verses where the Messenger is being consoled about his ongoing experience of rejection by his Meccan opponents. It can indicate his personal experience of revelation in a setting which is causing him trouble, as in Q 17:73, when the opponents were attempting to seduce the Messenger from what was communicated to him (*la-yaftinūnaka ʿani ʻlladhī awḥaynā ilayka*). The gravity of the Messenger's situation is taken up later in the sura in verses 86-87 where the Messenger is warned that God could take away what has been communicated to him (*la-nadhhabanna bi-llādhī awḥaynā ilayka*, Q 17:86). There is even a suggestion in Q 11:12 that the Messenger 'might leave behind part of what been communicated to thee (*fa-laʿallaka tārikun baʿḍa mā yūḥā ilayka*)' because of the continued denial of his prophecy by the opponents.

On the other hand, the Messenger is consoled with regard to his status as a mortal by assuring that God has only sent and communicated to men previously (*mā arsalnā min qablika illā rijālan nūḥī ilayhim*, Q 12:109, 16:43, 21:7) or that He only sends a messenger with the same monotheistic message (Q 21:25).[43] Both of these verses are surely referencing the charges of the Meccans found elsewhere in the Qur'an.[44] By the late Meccan period in Q 42:13 the Messenger is also assured that the religion which God ordained (*sharaʿa*) and communicated to him (*awḥaynā ilayka*) was also ordained for Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. This encouragement is taken to its logical conclusion in Q 4:163-4, an emphatic verse of the Medinan period that includes a protracted list of Biblical prophets which details not only the revelation's contiguousness with earlier revelations but also the continuity of the mode of communication as indicated by the repetition of the verb *awḥā*, 'We have

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[42] See also Q 21:45 where the Messenger is instructed to announce that he warns only according to the communication (*qul innamā undhirukum bi-l-waḥyi*).
[43] See also Q 42:3 which states that God communicates to the Messenger and those before him (*yūḥī ilayka wa-ilā ʻlladhīna min qablika*) and similarly Q 39:65 which goes onto to detail the continuity of the monotheistic message.
[44] For the charges regarding the issues of the Messenger's mortality, see e.g., Q 6:8-9; 91; 11:12; 17:94; 23:33; 25:7; 38:8; 43:31; 54:24 etc. And also see footnote 26 for secondary references regarding this issue vis-à-vis the opponents.

communicated to thee as We communicated to Noah and the Prophets after him (*innā awḥaynā ilayka ka-mā awḥaynā ilā Nūḥin wa-l-nabiyyīna min baʿdihi*), and We communicated (*wa-awḥaynā ilā*) to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Psalms. And Messengers We have already told thee of before, and Messengers We have not told thee of; and unto Moses God spoke directly'.

The Medinan verse above is the culmination of the concept of divine communication which explicitly places the Messenger's revelatory experience in line with biblical prophets. The concept, however, is most attested in the middle and late Meccan periods where it shows that the Messenger is acting under divine guidance and attests to his ongoing personal experience of receiving revelation. At this time, he is consoled in several verses with reference to the fact that God has communicated to mortals previously.

4.2.2 Narratives

In the narrative sections of the Qur'an the root *w-ḥ-y* occurs in 18 verses with nine in the middle Meccan, eight in the late Meccan and a single verse in the Medinan period. 14 of these verses refer to God's communication to biblical prophets.[45] In these biblical narratives the concept of divine communication is at the centre of particularly important moments of the prophets' ministries and shows that they received revelations at these crucial junctures and that their actions were divinely guided. These narratives offer a mirror image of the revelatory experience of the Qur'anic Messenger and place the Qur'anic Messenger in the same continuum as these envoys.[46]

In the narratives of the middle and late Meccan period, biblical prophets are depicted as having received revelation through the same mode as the Qur'anic Messenger. The majority of these verses are related to the life of Moses and there is

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[45] The four exceptions are God's communication to Moses' mother (middle Meccan: Q 20:38, late Meccan: Q 10:87,); to angels during one of the believers' battles where the angels offered support (Medinan, Q 8:12). Zechariah is the agent and he communicates to his people in Q 19:11 (middle Meccan). See the discussion in chapter 3.

[46] That divine communication played an important role in these narratives was noted in brief by Heinrich Speyer who stated that 'the gift of revelation plays a great part in the stories of the prophets', evidenced, he maintained, by the frequent occurrence of the verb *awḥā*. See *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 219.

an extended example of this in Q 20. In the story of the burning bush in Q 20:9-16 Moses is informed that he has been chosen by God and is told to listen to what is communicated, 'I Myself have chosen thee; therefore, listen to what is communicated (*fa-stamiʿ li-mā yūḥā*, Q 20:13)'. As has been mentioned in chapter 3, Sells rightly points out that it is the root *w-ḥ-y* which links the Messenger's visionary experience described in Q 53:5-18 and Moses vision in Q 20:9-16, in what he describes, in a somewhat overly complicated manner, as 'trans-discursively intermeshed'.[47] He then goes on to link the next part of the story regarding Moses' prayer to God to 'expand my breast' and the subsequent easing of his predicament (verses 25-35) with Q 94 where the divine voice reminds the Messenger that God opened his breast and relieved his burden. This, he contends is further 'imbricated' with the visionary experience in Q 53:5-17 because this section of the story is immediately followed by an 'emphatic use' of the verb *awḥā* in relation to Moses' mother in Q 20:38, '*awḥaynā ilā ummika mā yuḥā*'.[48] It is certainly possible to accept the proposition that the root *w-ḥ-y* links the two visionary experiences detailed in Q 20 and Q 53, but one wonders if a simpler explanation might be possible for the use of *awḥā* regarding Moses' mother—it confirms Moses' divine election and favour from God during his childhood. The verse is not necessarily formed in an emphatic manner either but is rather a way of expressing the indeterminate content of the communciation. The story then details Moses' dispute with Pharaoh, and he and Aaron are told to inform Pharaoh that his impending punishment for denying the Lord has been 'communicated to us' (*ūḥiya ilaynā* Q 20:48) signaling their prophecy of what is forthcoming. In this series of connected stories the concept of divine communication is closely linked to the person of Moses and confirms his prophetic election, the divine favour disposed upon him during his youth and that his actions were divinely guided during his ministry.

This is also the case in other narratives relating to the life of Moses. Q 26:52-66 details Moses' and the Israelites' exodus and Pharaoh's pursuit of them. In verse 52 it is communicated to Moses to make the emigration: 'And We communicated unto Moses, "Go with My servants by night (*wa-awḥaynā ilā Mūsā an asri bi-ʿabādī*); surely you will be followed"' and then later in verse 63 to part the sea (*fa-awḥaynā ilā Mūsā ani ʻḍrib bi-ʿaṣāka ʻl-baḥra*). In another retelling of the story in

[47] Sells, 'The Casting: A Close Hearing of Sūra 20:1-79', esp. 146.
[48] Sells, 146–47. This part of this story is retold in the late Meccan period, see Q 28:7.

Q 26:77-82, the emigration and the parting of the sea are amalgamated into one instance of divine communication in verse 77 and similarly during Moses' dispute with Pharaoh, God communicated to Moses (*awḥaynā ilā Mūsā*) to cast his staff before Pharaoh at which time it becomes a serpent (Q 7:117).[49] Finally, in Q 10:87 God also communicated to Moses and his brother Aaron (*awḥaynā ilā Mūsā wa-akhīhi*) where to settle the Israelites.

The concept of divine communication is therefore closely linked to the figure of Moses and important moments during his ministry. This, in turn, portrays his actions as divinely guided. While there has already been a certain emphasis by scholars on reading the Biblical stories as back-projections of the Messenger's ongoing experiences, particularly in regard to his rejection by his contemporaries, the element identified here of a shared revelatory experience based upon the concept of divine communication speaks more closely to the idea that these narratives are best read as demonstrating existing prophetological paradigms or typologies which the Messenger is in conformity with.[50]

The idea that the reception of divine communication is part of existing prophetic prototypes comes further into relief because it is not only Moses who receives revelation through this mode. As observed earlier, it is through *waḥy* that Noah is instructed to build the Ark.[51] When Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are elected to leaders of their community (*aʾimma*), God communicated to them (*awḥaynā ilayhim*) to do good deeds, perform prayer and give alms (Q 21:73). Q 14:13 is part of a series of retribution legends involving Biblical prophets and states that God communicated (*awḥā*) to unnamed messengers (*rusul*) that the evildoers will be destroyed, while in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, after Joseph is placed down the well, God communicated to him that he will inform them of this affair

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[49] See also Q 7:160 in the retelling of the same event in the late Meccan period.

[50] For studies that highlight the typological element, see particularly, Zwettler, 'A mantic manifesto', esp. 97; Stewart, 'Wansbrough, Bultmann, and the Theory of Variant Traditions in the Qur'ān' esp. 30-31, which offers a succinct overview of this question; Devin J. Stewart, 'Understanding the Quran in English: Notes on Translation, Form, and Prophetic Typology', in *Diversity in Language: Contrastive Studies in Arabic and English Theoretical and Applied Linguistics.*, ed. M. Ibrahim Zeinab, Sabiha T. Aydelott, and Nagwa Kassabgy (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 31–48; Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 2010, 573–80; Sinai, 'Muḥammad', esp. 7. For studies (generally earlier) that view the stories as back-projections of the experience of the Messenger, see for example, Bell, *Introduction*, 127–28; Bell and Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 133–34; Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the unbelievers*, 56–57.

[51] See Q 11:36-37 and 23:27.

(*awḥaynā ilayhi,* Q 12:15) —a moment which likely signifies his election to prophethood.

To conclude, the concept of divine communication in the narrative sections of the middle and late Meccan period shows that the actions of earlier prophets—particularly Moses—were guided by God and that these revelations occurred at many key moments in the prophets' ministries. The specific mode of divine communication is shared between these earlier messengers and the Qur'anic Messenger and therefore his revelatory experience is cast in the mould of existing prophetological paradigms.

4.2.3 Other formal types

There are two remaining formal types, which were categorised in the 'Miscellaneous' section in Table 3.5, where the concept of divine communication is attested. These are 'polemics' and 'revelation affirmations'. In the polemical sections of the late Meccan period there are five verses which are replies to the objections of the opponents—which in this case are likely originating from the pagan Meccan unbelievers and associators—that state that the Messenger only follows what has been communicated to him. Two of these verses reference the familiar requests of the opponents and underscore that all that is required of the Messenger is to follow what has been communicated to him to assure his prophetic status: Q 6:50 is a response to the need for additional proofs of his prophecy, 'Say: "I do not say to you, 'I possess the treasuries of God'; I know not the Unseen. And I say not to you, 'I am an angel'; I only follow what is communicated to me (*in attabiʿu illā mā yūḥā ilayya*)…"' and similarly in Q 7:203, 'And when thou bringest them not a sign, they say, "Why hast thou not chosen one?" Say: "I follow only what is communicated to me from my Lord (*qul innamā attabiʿu mā yūḥā min rabbī*)…"'. In Q 10:15 the opponents tell the Messenger to change the revelation (*baddilhu*) and the response is to limit the Messenger's agency 'Say: "It is not for me to alter it of my own accord. I follow nothing, except what is communicated to me (*in attabiʿu illā mā yūḥā ilayya*)…"'. The response to the charge by the unbelievers (*alladhīna kafarū*, Q 46:7) that the Messenger has fabricated the revelation (*iftarāhu*) in Q 46:9 is to affirm his continuity with previous messengers and to limit his agency with the 'only follow' statement (*in ittabiʿu illā mā yūḥā ilayya*). In these verses, the limiting of the Messenger's agency is not to be seen as negative but is rather affirming that

the revelation is entirely emanating from God and that the Messenger is under His divine guidance. This is explicitly stated in Q 34:50, which is part of a series of *qul* directives (verses 46-50) which are responding to the Messenger's experience of rejection and belittling (verses 43-45), 'Say: "If I go astray, I go astray only to my own loss; if I am guided, it is by what my Lord communicates to me (*ini 'htadaytu fa-bi-mā yūḥā ilayya min rabbī*). He is All-hearing, Ever-nigh"'. Interestingly, the Messenger is attributed agency here, but only in a negative sense. On the other hand, when he is guided, it is by what God communicated to him.

The final formal type to be considered are the revelation affirmations which are concentrated in the late Meccan period.[52] These verses, as the formal type insists and as we have already extensively seen, are concerned with affirming the revelation. In these verses this is achieved with recourse to its mode of communication. Four verses, all of which are late Meccan, include references to the Messenger's knowledge or experience. In Q 12:3 before God communicated 'this recitation' to him (*awḥaynā ilayka hādhā 'l-qurʾāna*) he was 'one of the heedless' and similarly in Q 11:49 he was not aware of the 'news of the unseen' (*anbāʾ al-ghayb*) until God communicated it to him (*nūḥīhā ilayka*). The same reference to the unseen (*al-ghayb*) is found in Q 12:102 and Q 3:44 which include deictics referring to the story of Joseph and the story of Mary respectively, and affirms that the Messenger could not have learned about these events when they occurred as he was not with 'them', i.e., the protagonists of the two stories. Rather, he could have only gained knowledge of the events through his ongoing divine communication with God. Other verses are not followed with a reference to the Messenger's knowledge, but the revelation is affirmed with recourse to its mode of communication to the Messenger, such as Q 17:39 'That is from what your Lord has communicated to you, of wisdom… (*dhālika mimmā awḥaynā ilayka rabbuka mina 'l-ḥimati*)'.[53]

Even in the two exceptions when the Messenger does not figure directly as the recipient of the communication he is close at hand. In the single early Meccan verse of this type there is no direct reference to the Messenger: Q 53:4 'it is naught but a communication, communicated (*in huwa illā waḥyun yūḥā*).' However, the Messenger is the subject of the preceding verses which states that he does not stray,

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[52] See early Meccan: Q 53:4; middle Meccan: Q 17:39; late Meccan (seven verses): Q 11:49; 12:3, 102; 35:31; 42:7, 51, 52; Medinan: Q 3:44.
[53] See also Q 35:31 and 42:7.

nor does he speak out of caprice (*al-hawā*, Q 53:3), to which the response in verse 4 is the affirmation that the revelation is something that can only be divinely communicated, which therefore precludes any volition on the Messenger's part. This verse is immediately followed by the visionary account of the Messenger where it is stated that God communicated to the Messenger (*fa-awḥā ilā ʿabdihi mā awḥā*, Q 53:10). Similarly, the much-discussed late Meccan verse Q 42:51—which affirms the three modes that messengers can receive revelation, of which *waḥy* features in two—lacks any reference to the Messenger but the following verse includes the affirmation that God has likewise communicated a spirit of His command to the Messenger (*ka-dhālika awḥaynā ilayka rūḥan min amrinā* Q 42:52).

4.2.4 Conclusion

The primary function of the concept of divine communication is to attest that the Messenger is receiving revelation and is therefore divinely guided. This certifies his status as a genuine prophet in line with earlier messengers—let us also not forget that the ability to decipher *waḥy* is only available to God's elect. This is attested almost exclusively in the middle and late Meccan periods. The former is evident from three formal types: the 'Messenger addresses' where the concept of divine communication is part of the Messenger's revelatory experiences; 'revelation affirmations' where the revelation is affirmed with recourse to its mode of communication to the Messenger, which is in turn related to the Messenger's individual experience and knowledge; and in the 'polemics' which affirm that the Messenger only follows what has been communicated to him. The continuity of the mode of communication is most prevalent in the late Meccan period and is shown in verses that console the Messenger about his experiences by detailing that the mode of communication between himself and God is the same as how God communicated with earlier messengers. This aspect culminates in a single Medinan verse which includes a list of Biblical prophets to whom God has communicated through *waḥy*. This shared revelatory experience is also suggested in the parallel narratives of these prophetic precursors in the middle and late Meccan periods where the concept of divine communication is attested at key moments during their ministries. This affirms their actions as divinely guided and illustrates that the Messenger's revelatory experience is conforming to existing prophetological paradigms.

4.3 Explanations of the chronological distribution of the roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y*

It has now been shown that the principal rhetorical function of divine sending down is to affirm the divine origin of the revelation whereas divine communication attests that the Messenger is a genuine prophet who is receiving revelation and therefore acting under divine guidance. Put plainly, the former is concerned with the message and the latter with the Messenger. While these concepts have been, necessarily, considered separately, it is of course true that the issues are intricately related: there can be no genuine prophet without his revelation being of divine origin, nor would the revelation be of divine origin if the proclamations were emanating from a false prophet. Taken together, then, the two principal rhetorical functions amount to a forceful literary device that assures both the divine origin of the revelation and the status of the Messenger as a genuine prophet, while at the same time illustrating the continuity of sending down with earlier revelations, and the mode of communication with earlier, mostly Biblical, prophets. Having said that, it is also evident from their chronological distributions that the two sides of the coin, so to speak, are employed at different times: divine sending down is well attested throughout the Qur'an but is particularly prevalent in the late Meccan and Medinan periods and divine communication is almost exclusively found within the middle and late Meccan periods.

In the previous chapter, I already rejected one possible explanation for this distribution: the chronological distribution of the primary formal types. To my mind, there remain two other possible explanations. The first relates to the change in the main antagonists of the text between the Meccan and Medinan periods and the second to the dynamic character of the Qur'an's self-referentiality. Regarding the first explanation, which I take to be generally less convincing, in the Meccan portion of the Qur'an the opponents are the so-called 'associators' and 'unbelievers' and there is little material in direct conversation with Jews and Christians, whereas in the Medinan period, the People of the Book, Jews and Christians are omnipresent and are either addressed directly or the subject of lengthy polemics.[54] As has been shown,

[54] Of course, also the 'hypocrites' (*al-munāfiqūn*). Both of these general observations can be seen in the verses discussed in this chapter. See also, Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 124, 176–78, 196–200; Sinai, 'The Unknown Known'; Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, 196–98; Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 131–41; Bell, *Introduction*, 107–9.

the root *w-ḥ-y* is well attested in pre-Islamic poetry and is undoubtedly of an indigenous Arabian character and although its semantics are of course considerably realigned in the Qur'an, it might well have been persuasive in convincing the Meccan audience that the Messenger was receiving a special form of communication, or in Qur'anic terms, a divine communication. However, as the concept is not attested in Biblical traditions it might prove less convincing to Jews and Christians who are the main antagonists in the Medinan period; in the very least, it is likely that there might be a more authoritative way of expressing it in their traditions.[55] On the other hand, as discussed in chapter 1, the theological premise of a two-tiered universe where God resides in heaven and mankind on earth is known from Biblical contexts as well as the Near East more generally, and therefore the concept of divine sending down might have proved convincing to the People of the Book—and no doubt to a certain extent the Meccans also—as a way of indicating the divine origin of the revelation. Consequently, this might explain the persistence of this concept throughout the proclamations. However, to accept this terminological explanation it is necessary to both dismiss the fact that both roots have distinctive meanings and rhetorical functions and to disregard that the Qur'an goes to some pains to associate the concept of divine communication with the Qur'anic Messenger and earlier Biblical prophets. The concept of divine communication, in at least the Qur'anic sense, is part of Judaeo-Christian prophetic tradition. This brings us to the second explanation—the Qur'an's dynamic response to the ongoing situation vis-à-vis its reception.

It is an apt statement of Wild's to characterise the way that the Qur'an speaks of its origin as a kind of 'embattled self-reflexivity' which is responding to questions and doubts over its origin—on multiple grounds—by not only the Meccan pagans but in the latter stages the inhabitants of Medina, including the People of the Book: Jews and Christians.[56] It has already been shown in the analysis presented here that many of the verses appear in polemical contexts, but even when they are not specifically within this literary context, such self-referential statements are ideally read against this background—they are, as Sinai has convincingly demonstrated, strategies for self-authorization.[57] It was necessary, after all, for the Qur'an to

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[55] See the concluding chapter 5 for further research prospects regarding this initial observation.
[56] Stefan Wild, 'Why self-referentiality?', in *Self-referentiality in the Qur'ān.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 3.
[57] See Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality'.

convince its audience that the revelation originated with God and was communicated to the Messenger, and it is undoubtedly through the concepts of divine sending down and divine communication that this concern is chiefly illustrated.

If it is accepted that the principal function of divine communication is to attest the status of the Messenger as a genuine prophet whereas the principal function of divine sending down affirms the divine origin of the revelation, it would appear that the former is more of a concern in primarily the middle and late Meccan periods whereas the latter, while attested in the early and middle Meccan period, is more pronounced in the late Meccan and Medinan periods. This chronological distribution, I believe, can be best explained with recourse to the dynamic nature of the Qur'an's self-referentiality. In the Meccan period one of the main subjects of debate, aside the denial of the opponents of the reality of Judgement Day and their continued associating of partners to God, is the Messenger himself.[58] It is in this period, as already demonstrated, that the Messenger is charged with being a poet (*shāʿir*), soothsayer (*kāhin*), or possessed by *jinn* (*majnūn*), or is accused outright as being a forger (*muftarī*); while other verses demand that the Messenger prove his prophecy with some kind of confirmatory miracle.[59] Against this charged atmosphere it was necessary to attest that the Messenger was actively receiving revelation, acting under divine guidance and that his revelatory experience was in keeping with the prophetological paradigms established in the Qur'an. This is achieved through continued references to the concept of divine communication both regarding the Messenger and earlier messengers. Such accusations, at least as they are formulated here, do not appear to be present in the Medinan portion of the Qur'an, or at the very least do not form a substantial part of the polemical discourse.[60] Therefore it was less imperative to confirm the status of the Messenger during the

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[58] For an overview of the Meccan corpus see, Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 176–79. On the material related to the Messenger specifically, see Boisliveau, 'Polemics in the Koran'. This is a synchronic study, although most of the polemical material discussed is Meccan.

[59] For the *shāʿir* accusation, see early Meccan: Q 69:41; middle Meccan: Q 21:5; 37:36. For *majnūn*, see early Meccan: Q 52:29, 68:2, 51; middle Meccan: Q 15:6; 37:36; 44:14. For *kāhin*, see Q 52:29 and 69:42, both early Meccan. For the forgery charge which is most often indicated by the verb *iftarā*, see for example, middle Meccan: Q 38:7; 21:5; 25:4; late Meccan: Q 10:37-8; 11:13, 35; 32:3; 34:43; 42:24; 46:8. For confirmatory miracles, an extended example is found in the middle Meccan sura Q 17:90-94.

[60] All of the accusations quoted in the above footnote are Meccan. Regarding a confirmatory miracle, there is at least one Medinan example. In Q 4:153 the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), most likely the Medinan Jews and Christians, deny the Messenger's veracity by asking why the Messenger has not sent down a book upon them (*tunazzila ʿalayhim kitāb*) as additional proof of his status.

latter stages of the proclamations. Or to put it another way, the status of the Messenger appears to be somewhat more assured.

In fact, Sinai has recently highlighted that in the Medinan period there is a 'noticeable elevation of Muhammad's status'.[61] Whereas in the Meccan texts his role is largely admonitory, he is to 'admonish' (*dhakkara*, e.g., Q 6:70, 50:45, 87:9), to 'warn' (*andhara*, e.g., Q 6:51, 46:12, 71:17) and to 'give good tidings' (*bashshara*, e.g., Q 19:97, 36:11, 45:8), by the Medinan period he is referred to by the Biblical title 'prophet' (*nabī*, e.g., Q 33:1, 6, 13). His heightened authority is indicated by the command to obey 'God and his Messenger' (e.g., Q 3:32, 4:13, 5:92) which is repeated numerous times, his being an exemplar (e.g., Q 33:21) and his role in settling disputes (e.g., Q 4:59)—and as already seen, and perhaps most significantly, the Messenger is now tasked with an adjudicatory role (e.g., Q 4:105, 5:48). The increased authority related to the Messenger's prophetic office and particularly the title of prophet (*nabī*) indicates that his status is in line with earlier Biblical prophets, or even superior to them, and attests that he is acting under divine guidance—one might even be tempted to view Q 4:163-4 as the final definitive statement in this regard. It appears that the position of the Messenger as a fully-fledged prophet was somewhat less controversial in the Medinan period. This also illustrates that while, to a certain extent, the status of the Messenger as a prophet may have been at least nominally accepted by the inhabitants of Medina, it does not necessary follow that the Messenger's revelation was unanimously accepted; it clearly was not. However, the need to prove that the Messenger was a prophet—that is, someone who is receiving revelation within existing prophetological paradigms—was clearly more of an issue in the Meccan period as opposed to the Medinan.

On the issue of the revelation itself, the debates surrounding this evidently remain at the forefront of the Qur'anic proclamations, certainly from the middle

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[61] Sinai, *The Qur'an: Introduction*, 206 and 124–25, 206–9. For full treatments on this issue, see Sinai, 'The Unknown Known'; Sinai, 'Muḥammad'. See also the important study by Alford T. Welch, 'Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data.', in *Islam's Understanding of Itself.*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis (Malibu, C: Undena, 1983), 15–52. Also, Hartmut Bobzin, 'The "Seal of the Prophets": Towards an Understanding of Muhammad's Prophethood', in *The Qurʾān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qurʾānic milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 565–83. Of course the basic distinction between the changing roles and status of the Messenger in the Meccan vs. Medinan period was observed much earlier, see, for example, Nöldeke et al., *The history*, 135-9 (i/164-169); Bell, *Introduction*, 107–8.

Meccan period onwards. While the issues regarding the revelation, as has been shown, undoubtedly shift throughout the proclamations, for example in the Meccan period the issue is focussed on its divine origin (e.g., Q 16:101-2), whereas in the Medinan period it has shifted to its reception (e.g., Q 2:91), the need to reiterate the revelation's divine origin persists throughout the Qur'an. The Qur'an does this by referencing the celestial event when the revelation was 'sent down', an event which not only affirms the divine origin of the revelation, but also underscores the consequences and import of the celestial event for the audience of the recitations as well as showing the act's congruity with earlier revelations. It is therefore also suggestive of the Qur'an's dynamic self-referentiality that this concept is most attested in the late Meccan and Medinan period when the revelation itself is met with perhaps its greatest test—the rejection by those who are already intimately familiar with scripture, the People of the Book, Jews and Christians. It is also noteworthy that it is in this period that the predominate image of the celestial event is the celestial source, *al-kitāb*, which balances the revelation's orality with a degree of scripturality associated with earlier revelations.

CHAPTER 5

THE QUR'ANIC CONCEPT OF REVELATION

> And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic recitation (*anzalnāhu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*), and We have turned about in it something of threats, that haply they may be godfearing, or it may arouse in them remembrance.
>
> So high exalted be God, the true King! And hasten not with the recitation ere its communication is accomplished unto thee (*wa-lā taʿjal bi-l-qurʾāni min qabli an yuqḍā ilayka waḥyuhu*); and say, 'O my Lord, increase me in knowledge'.
>
> Q 20:113-4

The two verses above clearly illustrate the distinction between the twin concepts of divine sending down and divine communication that I have elucidated throughout this thesis. In the first verse it is stated that God sent down the revelation as an Arabic recitation (*anzalnāhu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*). This is followed in the second verse with an instruction addressed to the Messenger to not hasten with the recitation until its communication (*waḥyuhu*) is complete to him. Evidently, even though God has already sent down the revelatory message, it has not yet been communicated to the Messenger: he must ensure that the communication is properly concluded before he recites anything. This reading is in stark contrast to the initial discussion of the literature on 'revelation' in the Qur'an which showed that the terms are often understood synonymously. While this has already been criticised by some scholars, it has been shown categorically in this thesis that this view can no longer be upheld, and it is necessary to think in completely different terms regarding 'revelation' in the Qur'an. I will now outline the 'Qur'anic concept of revelation' by detailing the five major findings of this thesis.

1. The roots *n-z-l* and *w-ḥ-y* are not synonymous

The root *n-z-l* must be understood to refer to a spatial event in the Qur'an regardless of whether the thing that is 'sent down' or 'descends' is related to the revelatory message or not. The activity is almost exclusively predicated of God and is indicative of the two-tier universe where God resides in heaven and mankind on earth. When God sends down He makes things available, although not necessarily accessible, to mankind. On the other hand, the root *w-ḥ-y* refers to communicative events. This mode of communication is particular and can only be understood by those who are able to decode the message, a semantic which is in congruity with its usage in pre-Islamic poetry. While it very rarely has non-divine usages, it is in the main how God communicated to His chosen elect in the Qur'an.

2. The Qur'anic concept of revelation contains two primary processes

The two primary processes of the Qur'anic concept of revelation are illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page.[1]

[1] I would like to thank Lucy Graves for rendering the diagram.

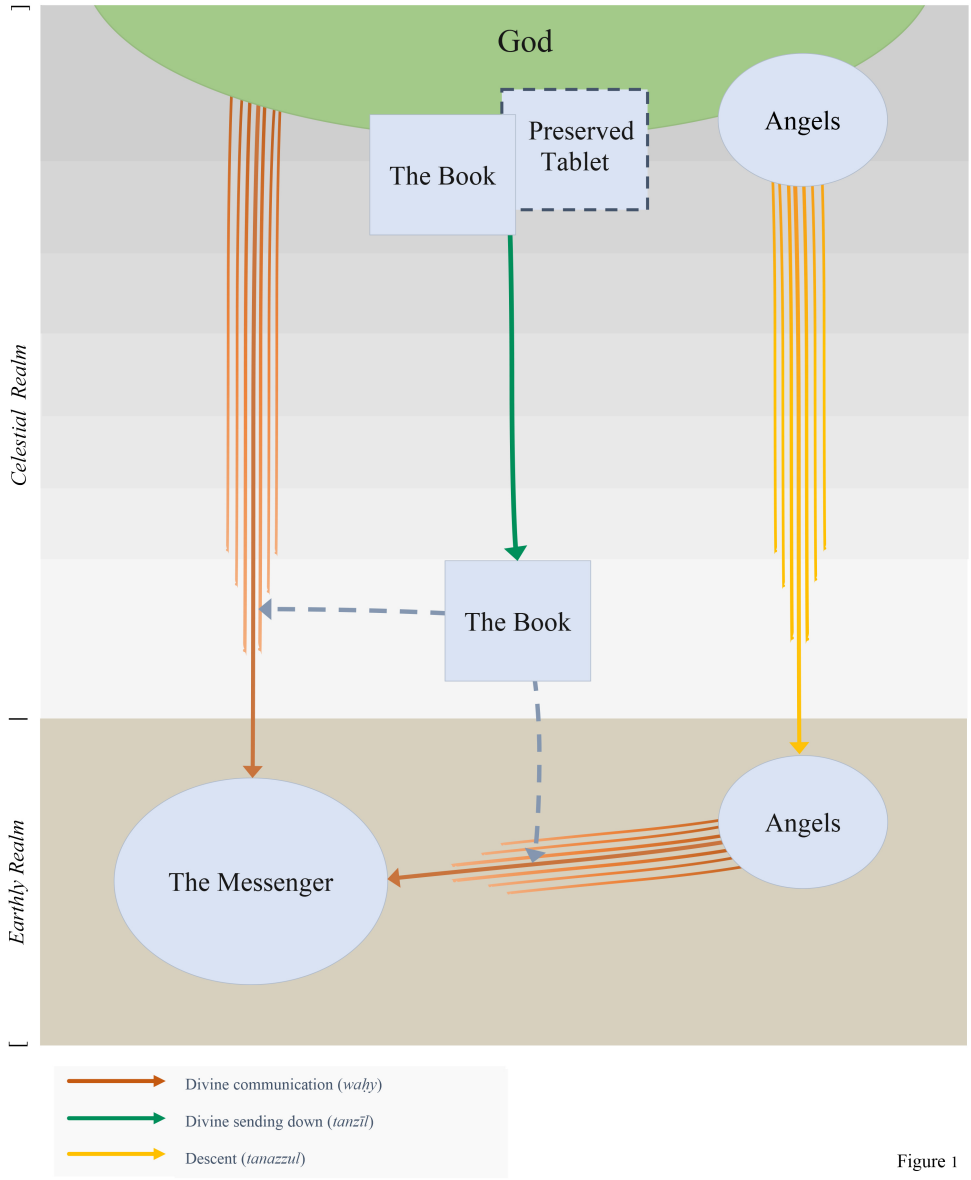

Figure 1

The diagram is divided into two realms: the celestial and the earthly. The celestial realm illustrates the source of the revelation, which is ultimately God. It is in the celestial realm that the celestial source book, *al-kitāb*, resides—a book which is the remote source from which the revelation is derived (e.g., Q 56:77-80 and 80:11-16). In the celestial realm is also the preserved tablet (*lawḥ maḥfūẓ*, Q 85:21-22), which represents another form of the celestial archetype although the exact relationship between this and *al-kitāb* remains to a certain extent obscure. They would appear none-the-less somewhat separate as the preserved tablet remains in its place, as it were, as it is never 'sent down'. It is the celestial source book which is 'sent down' by God, in what has been described as 'the celestial event'. This event

likely took place in a single night, referred to both as 'the Night of Decree' (*laylat al-qadr*, Q 97:1) and a 'blessed night' (*layla mubāraka*, Q 44:3). The celestial source book while being 'sent down' by God still resides in the celestial realm as it remains the remote transcendental source of the revelation. It was likely sent down from the highest heaven to the lowest, although this is far from conclusive based on the Qur'anic evidence alone. Against the prevailing consensus in scholarship, the 'celestial event' cannot be understood as a metaphor for an 'unveiling' or 'revealing'. It is best understood as an actual spatial event whereby being 'sent down' the celestial source book and by extension the revelation itself was made available to prophets and mankind, albeit not, necessarily, accessible. Its continued presence in the celestial sphere ensures that the celestial source book is, forever, 'elusive', to use Madigan's apt description.[2] It is, to be sure, the first stage of the revelatory process, but this must not be confused with its disclosure.

Once the celestial event has taken place, it is then that the celestial source book's content can be disclosed. The relationship between the revelation—or more specifically its earthly manifestation as a recitation (*qurʾān*)—and its heavenly source is a particularly complex issue. As has been shown, scholars such as Jeffery originally conceived of the Qur'an as deriving *in toto* from the celestial archetype, while more recent scholarship has rightly questioned this premise, such as Neuwirth's theory of the distinction between divine speech in general vs. specific pericopes derived from the celestial archetype.[3] Neuwirth's theory is perhaps the most convincing although the 'pericopes' are preferably understood not as verbatim excerpts but rather as 'renderings' which are adapted to their individual historical setting, as Sinai has recently contended.[4] Regardless of what the ultimate solution to this specific problem may be, it is clear that the revelations—whether or not they are drawing on the celestial source book as illustrated by the dotted arrow in Figure 1 — must be communicated to the Messenger. This transmission takes place through a specific mode of communication, *waḥy*, which is a coded form of divine communication that only God's elect can decipher. The source of the communication

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[2] Madigan, *The Qurʾān's self-image*, 167.
[3] See Jeffery, 'The Qur'ān as Scripture, I', esp. 47-55; Angelika Neuwirth, 'Referentiality and textuality in Sūrat al-Ḥijr: some observations on the Qur'ānic "canonical process" and the emergence of a community', in *Literary structures of religious meaning in the Qur'ān*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Curzon, 2000), 143–72. For the detailed discussion see chapter 2.
[4] Sinai, 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 117–26.

is firmly in the celestial realm with God and is received by the Messenger on earth, while the revelatory message is communicated over time—as indicated by the multiple lines in the diagram (in contrast to the single sending down of the celestial source book).

The communication of the revelatory message to the Messenger, whether via the celestial archetype or not, appears to be directly from God: in all instances God is either the agent or implied agent when the Messenger receives a divine communication. This corresponds with the first mode of communication outlined in Q 42:51 which details that God does not speak (*kallama*) to mankind except through *waḥy*. Despite this grammatical point, it is possible and indeed likely, that the Messenger received revelations through the additional two modes outlined in the verse. The second mode outlined in Q 42:51 is when God speaks from behind a screen (*min warāʾi ḥijābin*). This likely represents a revelatory experience accompanied by a vision like the Messenger's detailed in Q 52:4-12 and 13-18. It is probable that God still communicates through *waḥy* during such visionary experiences (e.g., Q 52:10). This mode, therefore, is not illustrated separately in Figure 1. The final mode is when God sends an angelic intermediary (*yursila rasūlan*) who communicates through *waḥy*. This involves the angels descending (*tanazzul*) between the celestial and earthly realm, as shown in Figure 1, and then communicating to the Messenger. This communication might also draw on the celestial archetype. While there is no example of an angel communicating to the Messenger in the Qur'an, it is clear that angelic messengers are involved with the revelatory events as they 'bring down' the revelation to the Messenger's heart (e.g., Q 26:193-4) and they descend (*tanazzalu*) when the celestial archetype was sent down (Q 97:4). Moreover, as contended, Q 42:51 might best be read as a codification of the Messenger's revelatory experiences and is thus representative of the differing circumstances in which he received the revelatory message.

3. Each concept is used to different rhetorical ends in the text

The concept of divine sending down affirms the divine origin of the revelatory message with reference to the celestial event, which indicates its origin in the celestial sphere and shows that the act is predicated of God. Moreover, the celestial event is depicted as having import for the audience of the revelation when it is linked

to the Messenger's role, the revelation's function or the audience directly. It is also an act that is affirmed as congruous with earlier revelations: both the Torah and the Gospel are said to have been 'sent down' by God (e.g., Q 3:3). On the other hand, the concept of divine communication is concerned with the status of the Messenger as it attests that he is receiving revelation and is endowed with the ability to decode the communication, *waḥy*. He is therefore divinely guided. This specific mode of receiving revelation is shared with earlier messengers and thus, the Messenger's revelatory experience conforms to existing prophetological paradigms. The two concepts, therefore, not only illustrate two different processes in the Qur'anic concept of revelation but are also employed rhetorically to different ends.

4. The chronological distribution of the two roots illustrates the dynamic nature of the Qur'an's self-referentiality

In the middle and late Meccan period, one of the primary subjects of debate is the Messenger himself and it is in these periods that the concept of divine communication is most prevalent. At this time, because of the Messenger's contested status, it was necessary to attest that the Messenger was receiving revelation, acting under divine guidance, and that his revelatory experience was in line with existing prophetical paradigms. This was achieved by repeated references to his having received revelation through *waḥy*. By the Medinan period, however, there is a substantial increase in the status of the Messenger—this is most obvious in his designation as a prophet (*nabī*) with its Biblical overtones and the repeated command to obey 'God and his Messenger'—and thus his status, at least to a certain extent, is somewhat more assured. The need to constantly reassure the Messenger and persuade the audience of his divinely guided status is somewhat less imperative and thus explains the almost total absence of the root *w-ḥ-y* in the Medinan period.

This is in contrast to the status of the revelation itself, which is contested in various ways throughout the proclamations and helps explain the fact that the concept of divine sending down is well attested from the middle Meccan period through to the Medinan. The need to reiterate the revelation's divine origin is most pronounced in the Medinan period when it is rejected by those who were already intimately familiar with scripture, the People of the Book, Jews and Christians. It is exactly at this time that the concept is most attested.

The way in which the Qur'an refers to its own genesis throughout the proclamations is not accidental. Rather, it is part of a rhetorical strategy where the pertinent aspects of the Qur'an's concept of revelation are employed, depending upon what issues are at stake during that stage of the proclamations, to convince the audience of either the divine origin of the revelatory message itself or the genuine status of the Messenger. The two cannot, nor need be, entirely separated, but are mutually complementary and build upon one another to form a forceful rhetorical device: divine sending down being concerned with the status of the revelatory message and divine communication with the status of the Messenger. The Qur'an's self-referentiality regarding its own genesis is both dynamic and responsive and the case of divine sending down (*tanzīl*) and divine communication (*waḥy*) is a particularly striking example.

5. The chronological distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y* supports the notion that the Qur'anic text can be divided into two layers

While Nöldeke's chronology is largely accepted as a necessary working model for any diachronic study of the Qur'anic text, there are still many scholars who reject such an approach outright. One of the key elements of Nöldeke's chronology is the idea that the text can be separated into two layers which he equates with Mecca and Medina, a position which he adopted from Islamic tradition. It is possible that the chronological distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y* can offer another, albeit small, attestation supporting this position—or at least the position that the text can divided into two strata. Whether these need be necessarily taken as indicative of a Meccan and Medinan setting is another issue, although as stated at the outset of the thesis, the broad *sīra* narrative is accepted as a working backdrop to the study presented here. Returning to the issue at hand, as has already been shown, the chronological distribution of the root *w-ḥ-y* is best understood against the backdrop of the contested status of the Messenger in the Meccan period vs. the elevated status of the Messenger in the Medinan period. The fact that the root is well attested in the Meccan period and almost totally absent from the Medinan period fits perfectly with how the Messenger is presented in each of the periods. This confirms that the text can be divided into two separate layers.

Future research prospects

With these conclusions in mind there are some additional prospects for future research which are worth considering. At the outset I detailed that this study was based upon the Qur'anic text itself. This was in order to understand the text on its own terms through a vigorous literary enquiry—such an approach to a sacred text is, of course, expected in Biblical Studies, although it is not always the case in Qur'anic Studies. It would now be beneficial to attempt to situate the findings presented in this thesis in their wider context, that is, the late antique environment of 7th century Arabia.

Elements of this endeavour have already been included in the work: as demonstrated in chapter 2, it is clear that heavenly books and celestial archetypes of revelation are concepts which are well grounded in late antique ideas. However, questions of whether it is possible to identify examples in neighbouring traditions of a heavenly book being 'sent down' and yet remaining transcendental and absent, require further investigation. It would also be worthwhile considering whether it is possible that the idea of a heightened and special communication between God and his messengers might have been known in late Antiquity. While it seems likely that the root *w-ḥ-y* and its application in the Qur'an is a uniquely Arab construct, this does not preclude that similar ideas, perhaps represented by different words, might be found in neighbouring scriptural traditions. Particularly relevant are likely to be the writings of the Church of the East. For example, prophecy was frequently discussed in the restoration of the Syriac speaking churches during the late sixth and early seventh centuries in which doctrinal frameworks were reconsidered using the concept of *mašlmānūtā* (traditions), as shown in the writings of John, Miaphysite bishop of Ephesus (d. ca. 586), and Babai the Great (d. 628).[5] Also, the vast body of

[5] See Emran Iqbal El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 50–70. For the utility of a 'comparative prophetology' in late Antiquity, see Michael E. Pregill, 'Ahab, Bar Kokhba, Muhammad and the Lying Spirit: Prophetic discourse before and after the Rise of Islam', in *Revelation, literature, and community in late antiquity*, ed. Philippa L. Townsend and Moulie Vidas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 271–313.

Syriac homilies might be of interest, such as the writings of Jacob of Sarūg (d. ca. 521).[6]

It is useful to note that while there is considerable commonality between the Qur'anic concept of revelation vis-à-vis the Messenger and earlier messengers, there are also differences which might fruitfully be investigated further. Two of the most obvious examples are in relation to Moses. The first is that in addition to God communicating to Moses through *waḥy*, it is said that He spoke to Moses directly (*wa-kallama Mūsā taklīman*, Q 4:164). This is clearly based upon the Biblical tradition, but it stands in direct contrast to Q 42:51 which prohibits God speaking to his messengers through normal speech (*kallama*).[7] The second, and perhaps most interesting difference, is that on several occasions it is stated that 'We have given Moses the Book' (*wa-ātaynā Mūsā 'l-kitāba*, Q 17:2, 23:49 and 25:35). The notion of the celestial source book might imply a shared celestial archetype for each of the revelations, but it must be borne in mind that there at least appears to be some discrepancy here—how can Moses be said to have been 'given' the book, if it is referring to the celestial archetype? Perhaps this need not necessarily be contradictory if it is indicative that he has only been given a portion of it. The process of a simple handing over, as it were, seems quite straight forward and might indicate a difference in the medium of its earthly manifestation—while the Qur'anic Messenger had an ongoing revelation through *waḥy* which was delivered as an oral recitation, *qurʾān*, Moses is said to have been given 'tablets' (*alwāḥ*, Q 7:145).[8] The difference in how the substance of the revelatory message was transmitted might also be indicated by the fact that the verb *awḥā* usually indicates a form of divine command to earlier messengers, as opposed to the ongoing communication of a revelatory message, as it does with the Messenger.

There are clearly differences in the presentation of revelation in the Qur'an in terms of itself and earlier messengers and these present interesting areas for future research. This investigation would benefit from intratextual analysis within the Qur'anic text but also from intertextual analysis comparing the Qur'anic versions of

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[6] On the history of Syriac literature, see Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum, *The scattered pearls: a history of Syriac literature and sciences*, ed. and trans. Matti Moosa, 2nd ed. (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2003).

[7] For Moses speaking directly to God in the Biblical tradition, see Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10.

[8] Sinai has already alluded to this point, see 'Qurʾānic self-referentiality', 120 and fn.66.

Biblical narratives with their original settings. Particular attention should be paid to how the communication between God and the messengers is represented. For example, it has already been mentioned that in the most elaborate telling of Moses and the burning bush in Q 20:9-16 the root *w-ḥ-y* features when Moses is elected and yet it is absent from other retellings.[9] In contrast, in Exodus 3 the Hebrew verbs denoting God's communication with Moses, *qara* 'to call, proclaim, read' and *amar* 'to utter, say' are all used for standard speech behaviours in the Bible.[10]

Another methodological principle of the study was that the traditional literature of interpretation of the Qur'an, *tafsīr*, was not consulted nor used to inform the analysis presented. This was to avoid a Qur'an *cum tafsīr* analysis. The way in which the concepts of divine sending down and divine communication have been understood in Islamic reception history and how these understandings contrast or harmonise with the findings presented here would form another useful research trajectory. A preliminary look at the commentary on Q 97 in Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* shows that while most traditions agree that God 'sent down' the Qur'an—here clearly being used in the sense of a proper noun—in a single pronouncement (*jumlatan wāḥidatan*) to the 'lowest heaven' (*al-samāʾ al-dunyā*), there are a variety of opinions regarding what happens next. Some envisage that God will send down the revelations over time; while others add that after the revelations have been sent down they will then be recited to the Messenger (presumably by Gabriel).[11] It is noteworthy that there is a tradition attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās (d.c. 687) which clearly distinguishes between divine sending down and divine communication:

> God sent down the Qur'an (*anzala ʿllāhu ʿl-qurʾāna*) to the lowest heaven in the Night of Decree, and when God desired to communicate something from it, then He communicated it (*wa-kāna ʿllāhu idhā arāda an yūḥiya minhu shayʾan awḥāhu*)[12]

To conclude, the Qur'anic concept of revelation is undoubtedly complex and contains many nuances. It is hoped that this thesis has contributed in some small way to understanding one of the key Qur'anic discourses and that it has the potential to offer exciting avenues for further research.

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[9] See, for example, Q 28:29-35 and 27:7-14.
[10] See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*.
[11] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, vol. 12 (al-Qāhira: Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1957), 158–59.
[12] al-Ṭabarī, 12:158.

APPENDIX I: Verses with the root *n-z-l* classified according to formal type

(A) Arranged by verse number

Qur'anic Verse	Formal type	Qur'anic Verse	Formal type
2:4	Polemics	4:61	Polemics
2:22	Signs	4:105	Revelation affirmation
2:23	Polemics	4:113	Messenger address
2:41	Polemics	4:136	Appeal
2:57	Polemics	4:140	Appeal
2:59	Polemics	4:153	Polemics
2:90	Polemics	4:162	Polemics
2:91	Polemics	4:166	Revelation affirmation
2:97	Revelation affirmation	4:174	Revelation affirmation
2:99	Revelation affirmation	5:44	Regulations
2:102	Polemics	5:45	Regulations
2:105	Polemics	5:47	Regulations
2:136	Polemics	5:48	Revelation affirmation
2:159	Polemics	5:49	Messenger address
2:164	Signs	5:59	Polemics
2:170	Polemics	5:64	Polemics
2:174	Polemics	5:66	Polemics
2:176	Revelation affirmation	5:67	Messenger address
2:185	Regulations	5:68	Messenger address
2:213	Revelation affirmation	5:81	Polemics
2:231	Regulations	5:83	Polemics
2:285	Messenger certification	5:101	Appeal
3:3	Revelation affirmation	5:104	Polemics
3:4	Revelation affirmation	5:112	Eschatology
3:7	Revelation affirmation	5:114	Eschatology
3:53	Narratives	5:115	Eschatology
3:65	Polemics	6:7	Polemics
3:72	Polemics	6:8	Polemics
3:84	Polemics	6:37	Polemics
3:93	Regulations	6:81	Narratives
3:124	Narratives	6:91	Polemics
3:151	Polemics	6:92	Revelation affirmation
3:154	Narratives	6:93	Polemics
3:198	Eschatology	6:99	Signs
3:199	Polemics	6:111	Polemics
4:47	Appeal	6:114	Revelation affirmation
4:60	Polemics	6:155	Appeal

Qur'anic Verse	Formal type	Qur'anic Verse	Formal type
6:156	Polemics	14:1	Revelation affirmation
6:157	Polemics	14:32	Signs
7:2	Revelation affirmation	15:6	Polemics
7:3	Appeal	15:8	Polemics
7:26	Narratives	15:9	Revelation affirmation
7:33	Regulations	15:21	Signs
7:57	Signs	15:22	Signs
7:71	Narratives	15:90	Polemics
7:157	Polemics	16:2	Messenger certification
7:160	Narratives	16:10	Signs
7:196	Polemics	16:24	Eschatology
8:11	Narratives	16:30	Eschatology
8:41	Regulations	16:44	Revelation affirmation
9:26	Narratives	16:64	Revelation affirmation
9:40	Narratives	16:65	Signs
9:64	Polemics	16:89	Revelation affirmation
9:86	Polemics	16:101	Polemics
9:97	Polemics	16:102	Polemics
9:124	Polemics	17:82	Revelation affirmation
9:127	Polemics	17:93	Polemics
10:5	Signs	17:95	Polemics
10:20	Polemics	17:102	Narratives
10:24	Signs	17:105	Revelation affirmation
10:59	Messenger address	17:106	Revelation affirmation
10:94	Messenger address	18:1	Messenger certification
11:12	Polemics	18:45	Messenger address
11:14	Polemics	18:102	Eschatology
12:2	Revelation affirmation	18:107	Eschatology
12:40	Narratives	19:64	Eschatology
12:59	Narratives	20:2	Revelation affirmation
13:1	Revelation affirmation	20:4	Revelation affirmation
13:7	Polemics	20:53	Signs
13:17	Signs	20:80	Narratives
13:19	Polemics	20:113	Revelation affirmation
13:27	Polemics	21:10	Revelation affirmation
13:36	Messenger address	21:50	Revelation affirmation
13:37	Messenger address	22:5	Signs

Qur'anic Verse	Formal type	Qur'anic Verse	Formal type
22:16	Revelation affirmation	31:21	Appeal
22:63	Signs	31:34	Signs
22:71	Polemics	32:2	Revelation affirmation
23:18	Signs	32:19	Eschatology
23:24	Narratives	33:26	Narratives
23:29	Narratives	34:2	Eulogy
24:1	Revelation affirmation	34:6	Messenger address
24:34	Revelation affirmation	35:27	Signs
24:43	Signs	36:5	Revelation affirmation
24:46	Revelation affirmation	36:15	Narratives
25:1	Messenger certification	36:28	Narratives
25:6	Polemics	36:39	Signs
25:7	Polemics	37:62	Eschatology
25:21	Polemics	37:177	Eschatology
25:25	Eschatology	38:8	Polemics
25:32	Polemics	38:29	Revelation affirmation
25:48	Signs	39:1	Revelation affirmation
26:4	Polemics	39:2	Revelation affirmation
26:192	Revelation affirmation	39:6	Signs
26:193	Revelation affirmation	39:21	Signs
26:198	Polemics	39:23	Revelation affirmation
26:210	Revelation affirmation	39:41	Revelation affirmation
26:221	Polemics	39:55	Messenger address
26:222	Polemics	40:2	Revelation affirmation
27:60	Signs	40:13	Signs
28:24	Narratives	41:2	Revelation affirmation
28:87	Messenger address	41:14	Narratives
29:34	Narratives	41:30	Eschatology
29:46	Appeal	41:32	Eschatology
29:47	Revelation affirmation	41:39	Signs
29:50	Polemics	41:42	Revelation affirmation
29:51	Polemics	42:15	Messenger address
29:63	Polemics	42:17	Revelation affirmation
30:24	Signs	42:27	Signs
30:35	Polemics	42:28	Signs
30:49	Signs	44:3	Revelation affirmation
31:10	Signs	43:11	Signs

Qur'anic Verse	Formal type
43:31	Polemics
45:2	Revelation affirmation
45:5	Signs
46:2	Revelation affirmation
46:30	Revelation affirmation
47:2	Eschatology
47:9	Polemics
47:20	Polemics
47:26	Polemics
48:4	Narratives
48:18	Narratives
48:26	Narratives
50:9	Signs
53:13	Messenger certification
53:23	Polemics
56:56	Eschatology
56:69	Signs
56:80	Revelation affirmation
56:93	Eschatology
57:4	Eulogy
57:9	Messenger certification
57:16	Polemics
57:25	Revelation affirmation
58:5	Polemics
59:21	Revelation affirmation
64:8	Appeal
65:5	Regulations
65:10	Revelation affirmation
65:12	Signs
67:9	Eschatology
69:43	Revelation affirmation
76:23	Revelation affirmation
78:14	Signs
97:1	Revelation affirmation
97:4	Didactic question

(B) Arranged by formal type:

Appeals	Didactic Question	Eschatology	Eulogy	Messenger address	Messenger certification	Narratives	Polemics	Regulations	Revelation affirmation	Signs
4:47	97:4	3:198	34:2	4:113	2:285	3:53	2:4	2:185	2:97	2:22
4:136		5:112	57:4	5:49	16:2	3:124	2:23	2:231	2:99	2:164
4:140		5:114		5:67	18:1	3:154	2:41	3:93	2:176	6:99
5:101		5:115		5:68	25:1	6:81	2:57	5:44	2:213	7:57
6:155		16:24		10:59	53:13	7:26	2:59	5:45	3:3	10:5
7:3		16:30		10:94	57:9	7:71	2:90	5:47	3:4	10:24
29:46		18:102		13:36		7:160	2:91	7:33	3:7	13:17
31:21		18:107		13:37		8:11	2:102	8:41	4:105	14:32
64:8		19:64		18:45		9:26	2:105	65:5	4:166	15:21
		25:25		28:87		9:40	2:136		4:174	15:22
		32:19		34:6		12:40	2:159		5:48	16:10
		37:62		39:55		12:59	2:170		6:92	16:65
		37:177		42:15		17:102	2:174		6:114	20:53
		41:30				20:80	3:65		7:2	22:5
		41:32				23:24	3:72		12:2	22:63
		47:2				23:29	3:84		13:1	23:18
		56:56				28:24	3:151		14:1	24:43

Eschatology
56:93
67:9

Narratives	Polemics
29:34	3:199
33:26	4:60
36:15	4:61
36:28	4:153
41:14	4:162
48:4	5:59
48:18	5:64
48:26	5:66
	5:81
	5:83
	5:104
	6:7
	6:8
	6:37
	6:91
	6:93
	6:111
	6:156
	6:157

Revelation affirmation	Signs
15:9	25:48
16:44	27:60
16:64	30:24
16:89	30:49
17:82	31:10
17:105	31:34
17:106	35:27
20:2	36:39
20:4	39:6
20:113	39:21
21:10	40:13
21:50	41:39
22:16	42:27
24:1	42:28
24:34	43:11
24:46	45:5
26:192	50:9
26:193	56:69
26:210	65:12

Polemics	Revelation affirmation	Signs
7:157	29:47	78:14
7:196	32:2	
9:64	36:5	
9:86	38:29	
9:97	39:1	
9:124	39:2	
9:127	39:23	
10:20	39:41	
11:12	40:2	
11:14	41:2	
13:7	41:42	
13:19	42:17	
13:27	44:3	
15:6	45:2	
15:8	46:2	
15:90	46:30	
16:101	56:80	
16:102	57:25	
17:93	59:21	

Polemics	Revelation affirmations
17:95	65:10
22:71	69:43
25:6	76:23
25:7	97:1
25:21	
25:32	
26:4	
26:198	
26:221	
26:222	
29:50	
29:51	
29:63	
30:35	
38:8	
43:31	
47:9	
47:20	
47:26	

Polemics
57:16
58:5

APPENDIX II: Verses with the root *w-h-y* classified according to formal type

(A) Arranged by verse number

Qur'anic Verse	Formal type	Qur'anic Verse	Formal type
3:44	Revelation affirmation	20:114	Messenger address
4:163	Messenger address	20:13	Narratives
5:111	Eschatology	20:38	Narratives
6:19	Messenger address	21:25	Messenger address
6:50	Polemics	21:45	Messenger address
6:93	Polemics	21:73	Narratives
6:106	Messenger address	21:108	Messenger address
6:112	Messenger address	23:27	Narratives
6:121	Regulations	26:52	Narratives
6:145	Messenger address	26:63	Narratives
7:117	Narratives	28:7	Narratives
7:160	Narratives	29:45	Messenger address
7:203	Polemics	33:2	Messenger address
8:12	Narratives	34:50	Polemics
10:2	Polemics	35:31	Revelation affirmation
10:15	Polemics	38:70	Messenger address
10:87	Narratives	39:65	Messenger address
10:109	Messenger address	41:6	Polemics
11:12	Messenger address	41:12	Signs
11:36	Narratives	42:3	Messenger address
11:37	Narratives	42:7	Revelation affirmation
11:49	Revelation affirmation	42:13	Messenger address
12:3	Revelation affirmation	43:43	Messenger address
12:15	Narratives	42:51	Revelation affirmation
12:102	Revelation affirmation	42:52	Revelation affirmation
12:109	Messenger address	46:9	Polemics
13:30	Messenger address	53:4	Revelation affirmation
14:13	Narratives	53:10	Messenger certification
16:43	Messenger address	72:1	Messenger address
16:68	Signs	99:5	Eschatology
16:123	Messenger address		
17:39	Revelation affirmation		
17:73	Messenger address		
17:86	Messenger address		
18:27	Messenger address		
18:110	Messenger address		
19:11	Narratives		

(B) Arranged by formal type:

Messenger Address	Eschatology	Messenger certification	Narratives	Polemics	Regulations	Revelation affirmation	Signs
4:163	5:111	53:10	7:117	6:50	6:121	3:44	16:68
6:19	99:5		7:160	6:93		11:49	41:12
6:106			8:12	7:203		12:3	
6:112			10:87	10:2		12:102	
6:145			11:36	10:15		17:39	
10:109			11:37	34:50		35:31	
11:12			12:15	41:6		42:7	
12:109			14:13	46:9		42:51	
13:30			19:11			42:52	
16:43			20:13			53:4	
16:123			20:38				
17:73			20:48				
17:86			20:77				
18:27			21:73				
18:110			23:27				
20:114			26:52				
21:7			26:63				
21:25			28:7				
21:45							
21:108							
29:45							

Messenger Address
33:2
38:70
39:65
42:3
42:13
43:43
72:1

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