

QS 16 Q 13:1–17

13.1 Alif Lam Mim Ra’.

Behold the verses of the Book!

What has been sent down upon you from your Lord is the truth, but most men do not believe.

13.2 God is He who raised up the heavens without any pillars that you can see.

Then He settled firmly on the Throne.

He made the sun and moon to do His bidding, each running for an appointed time.

He governs the world;

He makes clear His revelations;

Perhaps you will be convinced of the encounter with your Lord.

13.3 He it was who spread out the earth and placed in it towering mountains and rivers.

Of all fruits He planted therein two pairs.

He causes the day to envelop night.

In these are wonders to a people who reflect.

13.4 On earth are tracts of land, adjoining one other: gardens of vines, cultivation, and palm trees, bunched up or single. They are all watered by one stream. Yet some We prefer to others in the nourishment they yield. Surely in these are signs to a people of understanding.

13.5 Should you wonder, then wondrous indeed is what they say: “How can it be that once we are turned to dust we find ourselves created anew?” These are people who blaspheme against their Lord. These – chains shall encircle their necks. These are the people of the Fire, in which they shall abide for ever.

13.6 They ask you to hasten calamity upon them rather than good fortune, though punishments in plenty have passed before them. Your Lord is forgiving towards mankind, despite their wickedness, but your Lord is grievous in torment.

13.7 Those who blaspheme say: “If only some miracle is sent down upon him from his Lord!” You are but a warner, and for every people there is a guide.

13.8 God knows what each female is bearing, what wombs shorten their terms and what they lengthen. With Him, all things have their due measure.

13.9 Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, Almighty, Exalted!

13.1 Alif, Lâ, Mîm, Râ. Voici les versets du Livre; et ce qui t’a été révélé par ton Seigneur est la vérité; mais la plupart des gens ne croient pas.

13.2 Allah est Celui qui a élevé [bien haut] les cieux sans piliers visibles. Il s’est établi [istawâ] sur le Trône et a soumis le soleil et la lune, chacun poursuivant sa course vers un terme fixé. Il règle l’Ordre [de tout] et expose en détail les signes afin que vous ayez la certitude de la rencontre de votre Seigneur.

13.3 Et c’est Lui qui a étendu la terre et y a placé montagnes et fleuves. Et de chaque espèce de fruits Il y établit deux éléments de couple. Il fait que la nuit couvre le jour. Voilà bien là des preuves pour des gens qui réfléchissent.

13.4 Et sur la terre il y a des parcelles voisines les unes des autres, des jardins [plantés] de vignes, et des céréales et des palmiers, en touffes ou espacés, arrosés de la même eau, cependant Nous rendons supérieurs les uns aux autres quant au goût. Voilà bien là des preuves pour des gens qui raisonnent.

13.5 Et si tu dois t’étonner, rien de plus étonnant que leurs dires: «Quand nous seront poussière, reviendrons-nous vraiment à une nouvelle création?» Ceux-là sont ceux qui ne croient pas en leur Seigneur. Et ce sont eux qui auront des jougs à leur cou. Et ce sont eux les gens du Feu, où ils demeureront éternellement.

13.6 Et ils te demandent de hâter [la venue] du malheur plutôt que celle du bonheur. Certes, il s’est produit avant eux des châtiments exemplaires. Ton Seigneur est Détenteur du pardon pour les gens, malgré leurs méfaits. Et ton Seigneur est assurément dur en punition.

13.7 Et ceux qui ont mécru disent: «Pourquoi n’a-t-on pas fait descendre sur celui-ci (Muhammad) un miracle venant de son Seigneur?» Tu n’es qu’un avertisseur, et à chaque peuple un guide.

13.8 Allah sait ce que porte chaque femelle, et de combien la période de gestation dans la matrice est écourtée ou prolongée. Et toute chose a auprès de Lui sa mesure.

13.9 Le Connaisseur de ce qui est caché et de ce qui est apparent, Le Grand, Le Sublime.

13.10 It is all the same whether one of you conceals his speech or proclaims it, whether he goes into hiding by night or follows a road by day.

13.11 With him are attending angels, ahead and behind, guarding him in accordance with God's command.

God alters not what is in a people unless they alter what is in themselves.

If God desires to bring evil to a people, nothing can turn it away, nor, apart from Him, have they any protector.

13.12 He it is who shows you the lightning, causing both fear and expectation; He it is who raises heavy-laden clouds.

13.13 Thunder glorifies His praise and the angels His awe.

He casts thunderbolts and strikes therewith whomsoever He wills.

Yet they dispute regarding God, though Mighty in devising!

13.14 To Him belongs the Call to Truth.

As for those whom they worship apart from Him, they answer not their prayer in any wise, save like one who spreads the palms of his hands towards water to convey to his mouth, and the water will not reach it. The prayers of unbelievers are nothing but illusion.

13.15 To God prostrate all who are in the heavens and on earth, willing or unwilling, as do their shadows, at dawn or at dusk.

13.16 Say: "Who is the Lord of the heavens and earth?"

Say: "God!"

Say: "So have you taken to yourselves as protectors, instead of Him, such as are powerless to benefit or harm themselves?"

Say: "Is the blind man the equal of one who sees? Or is darkness the equal of light? Or have they fashioned partners to God who created something similar to His creation, and so creation became a matter that perplexed them?"

Say: "God is the Creator of all things; He is One, Overpowering."

13.17 He sent down water from the sky, and the valleys flowed in due measure.

The torrent carried away a swell of froth, like the froth they light a fire upon, seeking to fashion an ornament or an article of pleasure –

13.10. Sont égaux pour lui, celui parmi vous qui tient secrète sa parole, et celui qui la divulgue, celui qui se cache la nuit comme celui qui se montre au grand jour.

13.11 Il [l'homme] a par devant lui et derrière lui des Anges qui se relaient et qui veillent sur lui par ordre d'Allah. En vérité, Allah ne modifie point l'état d'un peuple, tant que les [individus qui le composent] ne modifient pas ce qui est en eux-mêmes. Et lorsqu'Allah veut [infliger] un mal à un peuple, nul ne peut le repousser: ils n'ont en dehors de Lui aucun protecteur.

13.12 C'est lui qui vous fait voir l'éclair [qui vous inspire] crainte et espoir; et Il crée les nuages lourds.

13.13 Le tonnerre Le glorifie par Sa louange, et aussi les Anges, sous l'effet de Sa crainte. Et Il lance les foudres dont Il atteint qui Il veut. Or ils disputent au sujet d'Allah alors qu'Il est redoutable en Sa force.

13.14 A Lui l'appel de la Vérité! Ceux qu'ils invoquent en dehors de Lui ne leur répondent d'aucune façon; semblables à celui qui étend ses deux mains vers l'eau pour la porter à sa bouche, mais qui ne parvient jamais à l'atteindre. L'invocation des mécréants n'est que vanité.

13.15 Et c'est à Allah que se prosternent, bon gré mal gré, tous ceux qui sont dans les cieus et sur la terre, ainsi que leurs ombres, au début et à la fin de la journée.

13.16 Dis: «Qui est le Seigneur des cieus et de la terre?» Dis: «Allah». Dis: «Et prendrez-vous en dehors de Lui, des maîtres qui ne détiennent pour eux-mêmes ni bien ni mal?» Dis: «Sont-ils égaux, l'aveugle et celui qui voit? Ou sont-elles égales, les ténèbres et la lumière? Ou donnent-ils à Allah des associés qui créent comme Sa création au point que les deux créations se soient confondues à eux? Dis: «Allah est le Créateur de toute chose, et c'est Lui l'Unique, le Dominateur suprême».

13.17 Il a fait descendre une eau du ciel à laquelle des vallées servent de lit, selon leur grandeur. Le flot débordé a charrié une écume flottante; et semblable à celle-ci est [l'] écume provenant de ce qu'on porte à fusion, dans le feu pour [fabriquer] des bijoux et des ustensiles. Ainsi Allah représente en parabole la Vérité et le Faux: l'écume [du torrent et du métal fondu]

upon that too is a similar froth. Thus does God strike a parable of truth and falsehood. As to the froth, it vanishes into the earth, but that which benefits mankind remains on the ground. Thus does God strike parables.

s'en va, au rebut, tandis que [l'eau et les objets] utiles aux Hommes demeurent sur la terre. Ainsi Allah propose des paraboles.

سورة الرعد

المَر تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ وَالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (1) اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ (2) وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رِوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمَنْ كُلِّ الشَّجَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا رِوْحَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (3) وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٍ وَجَنَاتٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزُرُوعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صُنُوفٌ وَأَعْنَابٌ وَنَخِيلٌ مُنْتَبِهَاتٌ لِيَأْكُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِمْ وَمَنْ عَنِيبَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفِصِلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (4) وَإِنْ تَعَجَّبْتَ فَعَجَبْتَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِنْذًا كُنَّا تَرَابًا إِنَّمَا لَقِيَ خَلْقٌ جَدِيدٌ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ الْأَغْلَالُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (5) وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثَلَاتُ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (6) وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (7) اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنثَى وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامَ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ (8) عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ (9) سِوَاءَ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسْرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ (10) لَهُ مُعَقَّبَاتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمَنْ خَلْفَهُ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ (11) هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمْ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثَّقَالَ (12) وَيَسْخَرُ الرِّعْدَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةَ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ (13) لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كِتَابِطٌ كَثِيفَةٌ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ وَمَا دَعَا الْكَاذِبِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (14) وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَظِلَالُهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ (15) قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلِ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلْقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (16) أُنزِلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ جَلِيلٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ كَذَلِكَ يُضْرَبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يُضْرَبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ (17)

Azaiez

Passage centré sur la grandeur de la création et de son auteur. On notera la présence d'un contre-discours au v. 5 : *a-idā kunnā turāban a-'innā la-fi ḥalqin ḡadīdin*. Il s'agit d'un « contre-discours eschatologique » que je définis comme un discours rapporté des adversaires relatifs à l'eschatologie et plus précisément, ici, à la résurrection des corps. C'est en effet, l'un des trois thèmes des contre-discours eschatologiques. Il en existe deux autres autour des thèmes de l'Heure eschatologique (Q 7:187 ; 10:48 ; 17:51 ; 21:38 ; 27:71 ; 32:28 ; 34:3, 29 ; 36:48 ; 41:50 ; 45:32 ; 51:12 ; 67:25 ; 75:6 ; 79:42) et de la rétribution des actes (Q 2:80, 111 ; 3:24 ; 10:53 ; 11:8). Dans notre nomenclature (thèse de doctorat), le v. 5 est le 107^{ème} contre-discours coranique. Ce verset est à rapprocher des contre-discours suivants : Q 13:5 ; 17:49, 98 ; 23:82–83 ; 27:67 ; 32:10 ; 36:78 ; 37:15–17 ; 44:34–35 ; 50:2–3 ; 56:47–48 ; 79:10. Ce contre-discours est également employé dans un traité du Talmud, le Sanhédrin (90 b) : « un hérétique disait au rabbi Gamaliel: Vous prétendez que les morts revivront, mais ils sont réduits en poussière; la poussière peut-elle prendre vie ? » (cf. Azaiez 2012).

Dye

Hymne sur les preuves de la résurrection et les signes de Dieu. Le texte se situe dans le droit fil de l'apologétique chrétienne, notamment l'homilétique syriaque (voir par exemple Aphraate, *Dem.* VIII). Les vv. 2–4, 8–10 décrivent l'omnipotence et la sollicitude divines. Ils fournissent ainsi les arguments susceptibles de répondre à la question posée au v. 5 : comment la résurrection est-elle possible ?

Les arguments principaux sont les suivants : si Dieu a pu créer le monde une première fois, il pourra aussi procéder à une nouvelle création lors de la Résurrection (Q 7:54, verset parallèle à Q 13:2; 17:98; 29:19; 36:81; 46:33; 50:15) ; c'est Dieu qui est à l'origine de la vie, et qui fournit ce dont les êtres vivants ont besoin pour vivre – en premier lieu, l'eau (Q 25:48–50; 30:48–49; 36:33–35).

Des versets relatifs à la menace du châtement sont intercalés dans le propos, formant ainsi une habile polyphonie. Les deux lignes mélodiques convergent toutefois vers la même idée : la folie des infidèles, incapables de reconnaître la puissance et la bonté divines, et insensibles aux menaces des châtements qui les attendent, alors qu'ils ont pourtant été dûment avertis (v. 7).

Grodzki

Another *sūra* introduced by the *ḥurūf muqatta'a* (Arab: disconnected letters) or *muqatta'āt*, however the only one having this very combination of *alif*, *lā*, *mīm* and *rā'* letters. Al-Ṭabarī lists in his *Tafsīr* fourteen different hypotheses elucidating the possible functions of these letters. Three centuries later, al-Rāzī already mentions about twenty ways of interpreting them. Later, we have dozens of other creative and inventive attempts to explain this mystery (inter alia, vocative forms used by the Islamic prophet to address representatives of different tribes; signs to be understood through different mnemonic and semiotic techniques; abbreviations used in pre-Islamic poetry; “names and attributes of” creation; part of the “mathematical miracle of the Qur'ān”; alternative names for Qur'ānic *sūras* commonly used in different cultural/geographic milieus; initials of Qur'ānic editors; battle cries used by the Prophet Muḥammad to communicate with his army; oath formulas of allegiance pledged in the Arabic dialect of Hijaz; hints indicating the proper rhythm in which given *sūras* of the Qur'ān should be recited; or – following the Syriac liturgical tradition – a reminiscence of some customary letter abbreviations and other notations intended as reference marks to liturgical doxological formulas, psalms, responsorial chants, antiphons, intonation of hymns in appropriate tones and reading passages from the scripture. According to this theory (Luxenberg 2008) *alif*, *lām*, *mīm* and *rā'* introducing Q 13 are supposed to mean: *emar lī Māryā rabbā* (Arab. *qāla lī l-Rabb al-'Aẓīm*, Eng. *the almighty Lord spoke to me*).

Pregill

A sermon about divine providence. To me, the heavy emphasis on the manifold signs of God's governance of natural phenomena here echoes similar passages in the Psalms, especially in the drawing of an explicit connection between correct interpretation of manifest signs and acknowledgement of the Creator.

As Hirshman and others have argued, the emphasis on divine guidance and providence in early Jewish and Christian exegesis of scripture probably points to a subtext of gnostic-dualist critique, and one wonders if Qur'ānic passages like this might be intended to play a similar function, especially given the possibility of some penetration of Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism into Arabia in Late Antiquity. (Notably, passages and verses from the Qur'ān pertaining to the themes of providence and divine subtlety in creating the world often appear as inscriptions in medieval Islamic architecture in Iran, for example on the burial towers at Marāgha and Kharrāqān; while they are often interpreted as sly references to the artistry of the builders, it is also possible that they were intended to polemicize against Zoroastrians or even Muslims who leaned in the direction of dualism).

In this connection, I like Hawting's suggestion during the Seminar at Notre Dame that *ṭaw'an wa-karhan* in v. 15 signifies good and evil spirits – meaning that both realms, dark and light, are under the dominion of the one God.

V. 7: Reference to the sign demanded of the Qur'ānic prophet by unbelievers anticipates vv. 27–43, in which the issue of evidentiary miracles is taken up again and further developed. The message here is obviously one of legitimating the Qur'ānic prophet, who lacks signs to bring other than the Qur'ān itself, by pointing to the signs that vindicate his message that are to be found all around in the natural world. These function as copious evidence of the Creator, His providence, and, by implication, the inevitability of judgment for anyone who can interpret those signs correctly.

Reynolds

This passage might be read as a response to the Christian adoration of Jesus Christ. Here the Qur'ān presents Allah as the god to be adored instead of Christ. This theologically charged reading is more evident if one understands *Allāh* as a proper name, and not simply as the Arabic word for God (on these question see especially Gimaret 1988). Thereby one might perceive more clearly that the Qur'ān is not so much describing the nature of God as much as insisting (against Christians) that its God is the true creator and judge of the world. To this end I wonder if v. 15 (to *Allāh* bow all who are in the heavens and the earth) is a response to Phil 2:9–11: “And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names; so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Stewart

The *maṭal* is of course a genre in the Qurʾān, and in pre-Islamic Arabic, and in later Arabic and the Arabic dialects comes to be the normal term for proverb. It is clearly based on the idea that a proverb is essentially a comparison, as in the Egyptian proverb *zayy il-minshār—ṭāliʿ wākil, nāzil wākil* [He is] like a saw—he eats on the way up and eats on the way down” (which refers to the characteristic action of a broker, who takes his fee whether you are buying or selling, gaining or losing) or Moroccan *bḥal libra ketkassi w-ḥiyya ʿoryāna* “Like a needle—it clothes others while it is itself naked” etc. It would appear to be very ancient, perhaps even proto-Semitic, for the Hebrew has the etymologically related *mashal* with a similar meaning, which Arabic could not have borrowed directly. It is not entirely clear to me how far back the term *amṭāl* used in v. 17 goes: does it refer only to the statements in v. 17, or vv. 16–17, or more? It is used with the verb *yaḍribu* and this seems to be part of the convention of the speech genre. This is taken over in Persian, where the term for proverb is actually *zarbo l-masal* instead of simply *masal*. In the Qurʾān they tend to be short comparisons, but there are a few longer ones that look more like the parables of Jesus in the Gospels. There have been several studies in German on the parable in the Qurʾān (Bulh 1924; Lohmann 1966; Sister 1931).

Toorawa

I am struck by the deployment—i. e. the rhetorical use—of the word and image of *māʾ* (“water”) in this *sūra*. It appears three times, in vv. 4, 14 and 17. In v. 4, reference is made to watering (*yusqā*, “is watered”) with “one water” (*māʾ wāḥid*). In v. 14, water is used in a powerful simile of deprivation: “*illā ka-bāsiṭi kaffayhi ilā l-māʾi li-yabluḡa fāhu wa-mā huwa bi-bāliḡihi*” (“except as one who stretches out his hands to water, that it may reach his mouth, and it does not do so” [trans. Jones 2007: 235]). In v. 17, the water is the quotidian one sent from the skies, a water that generates rivers (*aw-diya*), torrent (*sayl*), and foam (*zabad*). This *zabad* (“foam”), which appears three times in the verse, appears only here in the Qurʾān and is therefore an isolate and hapax. Indeed, water in this early part of the *sūra* appears precisely where the hapaxes also appear: v. 4 (*ṣinwān*, “palms with multiple and single stems”), v. 13 (*miḥāl*, “plans”?), and v. 17 (*ḡufāʾ*, “scum, froth”; *zabad*, “foam”). And there is a hapax sequence of *fawātiḥ* letters too in the very opening, namely *Alif-Lām-Mīm-Rāʾ* (v. 1).

These seventeen verses have been recognized as rhetorically productive as a passage in terms of imagery—*vide* nature, natural processes, agriculture, metalwork—the figurative nature of which is signaled by the text itself (by mentioning ‘*aḡab*, “wonder,” in v. 5, and *amṭāl*, “parallels,” in v. 17). Attention must also be paid to *individual* words and images, such as water, which I mentioned above, but also e. g. *ḥilya* (“ornament, jewelry”) and *matāʾ* (“wares, utensils, goods”), or else we run the risk of having an incomplete picture of the Qurʾān.

Younes

I have argued elsewhere (Younes 2011) that there is strong evidence to suggest that *yudabbiru al-amr* (v. 2) in fact refers to “speaking the word” and not to “ordering the course or managing the affair,” as it is traditionally understood.

The traditional understanding and interpretation of the word *al-maṭulāt* in v. 6 is problematic. Not only is this word a *hapax legomenon* in the Qur’ān, but its morphological structure *fa’ulā(t)* is unique in the language and does not conform to any known morphological pattern. The word is traditionally understood to mean “punishments or “severe torture.” There seems to be a pattern followed by the traditional interpreters (e. g. Ṭabarī 2005, 7: 340) where words that seem to be vague, exceptional, or difficult to understand for one reason or another are given a negative “spin” with punishment as a common theme and with the perpetrators often turned into pigs and monkeys.

Ṭabarī (ibid. 341) quotes an interpretation of the word by Muğāhid as “examples” (*’amṭāl*). This makes better sense in the context of the *sūra*. In addition, no word derived from the root *M-Ṭ-L* has a meaning related to punishment or torture, but several derivatives share the meaning of “example.”