

## QS 33 Q 37:149 – 182

37.149 So sound them out: “To your Lord daughters are born, and to them sons?

37.150 Or did We create the angels female, in their presence?”

37.151 It is only their deceit that makes them say

37.152 that God begat progeny; They are indeed lying.

37.153 So He preferred girls to boys?

37.154 What is it with you and your judgments?

37.155 Will you not remember?

37.156 Or do you possess some obvious proof?

37.157 Go bring your book then, if you speak the truth!

37.158 And they set up a kinship between Him and the *Jinn*,

Even though the *Jinn* know that they shall be summoned to judgment –

37.159 May God be glorified far above what they allege! –

37.160 Save for the devout worshippers of God.

37.161 You, and what you worship,

37.162 shall not lead any astray from Him,

37.163 Save those to be scorched in hell.

37.164. “None of us there is but has a well known station.

37.165 We are indeed arrayed in ranks;

37.166 We are indeed the glorifiers.”

37.167 Once they would have said:

37.168. “If only we had a Remembrance from the ancients,

37.169 we would be devout servants of God.”

37.170 But they blasphemed against it, and they will surely know!

37.171 Our Word has already passed to Our servants the Messengers,

37.172 That they shall be granted victory,

37.173 That Our troops shall prevail.

37.174 So leave them alone for a while,

37.175 And observe them, and their eyes shall be opened.

37.176 Is it Our torment they wish to hasten?

37.177 When it descends upon their vicinity, grievous shall be the dawn of those who were warned!

37.178 So leave them alone for a while,

37.149 Pose-leur donc la question: «Ton Seigneur aurait-Il des filles et eux des fils?

37.150 Ou bien avons-Nous créé des Anges de sexe féminin, et en sont-ils témoins?».

37.151 Certes, ils disent dans leur mensonge: 37.152. «Allah a engendré» mais ce sont certainement des menteurs!

37.153 Aurait-Il choisi des filles de préférence à des fils?

37.154 Qu’avez-vous donc à juger ainsi?

37.155 Ne réfléchissez-vous donc pas?

37.156 Ou avez-vous un argument évident?

37.157 Apportez donc votre Livre si vous êtes véridiques!»

37.158 Et ils ont établi entre Lui et les djinns une parenté, alors que les djinns savent bien qu’ils [les mécréants] vont être emmenés (pour le châtement).

37.159 Gloire à Allah. Il est au-dessus de ce qu’ils décrivent!

37.160 Exception faite des serviteurs élus d’Allah.

37.161 En vérité, vous et tout ce que vous adorez,

37.162 ne pourrez tenter [personne],

37.163 excepté celui qui sera brûlé dans la Fournaise.

37.164 Il n’y en a pas un, parmi nous, qui n’ait une place connue;

37.165 nous sommes certes, les rangés en rangs;

37.166 et c’est nous certes, qui célébrons la gloire [d’Allah].

37.167 Même s’ils disaient:

37.168. «Si nous avions eu un Rappel de [nos] ancêtres,

37.169 nous aurions été certes les serviteurs élus d’Allah!

37.170 Ils y ont mécré et ils sauront bientôt.

37.171 En effet, Notre Parole a déjà été donnée à Nos serviteurs, les Messagers,

37.172 que ce sont eux qui seront secourus,

37.173 et que Nos soldats auront le dessus.

37.174 Eloigne-toi d’eux, jusqu’à un certain temps;

37.175 et observe-les: ils verront bientôt!

37.179 And observe, and their eyes shall be opened.  
 37.180 May your Lord, Lord of Might, be glorified far above what they allege!  
 37.181 Peace be upon the Messengers!  
 37.182 Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

37.176 Quoi! est-ce Notre châtimeut qu'ils cherchent à hâter?  
 37.177 Quand il tombera dans leur place, ce sera alors un mauvais matin pour ceux qu'on a avertis!  
 37.178 Et éloigne-toi d'eux jusqu'à un certain temps;  
 37.179 et observe; ils verront bientôt!  
 37.180 Gloire à ton Seigneur, le Seigneur de la puissance. Il est au-dessus de ce qu'ils décrivent!  
 37.181 Et paix sur les Messagers,  
 37.182 et louange à Allah, Seigneur de l'univers!

سورة الصافات

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبُنُونَ (149) أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ (150) أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنْ إِيحَامِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ (151) وَلَدَ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (152) أَضَلَّ عَلَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ (153) مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (154) أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (155) أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُبِينٌ (156) فَأَتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (157) وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجَنَّةِ نِجَابًا وَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (158) سُبحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ (159) إِيحَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ (160) فَإِنِّكُمْ وَمَا تُعْبُدُونَ (161) مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَاعِلِينَ (162) إِيحَادًا مِنْ هُوَ صَالِ الْجَبِيمِ (163) وَمَا مَنَا إِيحَادًا لَهُ مِمَّا مَعْلُومٍ (164) وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُونَ (165) وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (166) وَإِن كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ (167) لَوْ أَنَّنَّ عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرًا مِنَ الْأُولِينَ (168) لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ (169) فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (170) وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (171) إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنْصُورُونَ (172) وَإِنَّا جُنْدُنَا لَهُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ (173) فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (174) وَأَبْصُرْ هُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (175) أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (176) فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (177) وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (178) وَأَبْصُرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (179) سُبحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (180) وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (181) وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (182)

**El-Badawi**

A profoundly poignant and perplexing passage.

Hawting frames “the daughters of God” in a generally monotheistic context. Lüling speaks of a “Qur’ānic angelology” in a specifically Christian context. Vv. 149–60 appear to respond to a Christian (and perhaps syncretistic) audience, who are not faithful (*muḥlis*) to God, but are serving/worshiping divine beings on account of their female superiority (v. 153; the same assumption is found in Q 53:19–22 when discussing Al-Lāt, Manāt and ‘Uzzā). Vv. 156–57 challenge the audience by reminding them that these female deities possess neither “authority” (*sulṭān*) nor “written mandate” (*kitāb*)—terminology pregnant with meaning in the Aramaic Biblical and post-Biblical literature of the late antique Near East.

Is there alternately an anthropological study of the “mother goddess” or feminist reading that can shed some light?

Vv. 161–70 serve as a warning to the audience. Still, how do the “[male] rank makers” (*al-ṣāffūn*) in v. 165 line up with the “[female] rank makers” (*al-ṣāffāt*) at the very start of this very same *sūra* (Q 37:1), and after which it is named? Is the entire

*sūra* a lesson to the audience that while (female?) angels are the rank makers (*al-ṣāf-fāt?*) on the Day of Judgment, that God is somehow in charge?

Vv. 171–82 conclude the *sūra* in cryptic fashion by repeating the warning in vv. 175, 179, fulfilling the promise to the (human?) messengers (*mursalūn*) and asserting that victory belongs to the (angelic?) army (*ğund*). Another general observation is the assonance in final words like *ṣāffūn*, *muḥlaṣūn*, *manṣūrūn*, *yubṣirūn* and *yaṣifūn*.

### Grodzki

The idea of female angels seems perplexing. This is why following the trail of the Elchasaites, mentioned by Tesei, is interesting as that syncretic ancient sect (related perhaps to the Ebionites and Gnosticism) claimed to have received a part of its revelation from a female angel. Although active mostly between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E., it seems that their existence might not have entirely ceased in some pockets of the Middle East till the arrival of Islam. Is the Qur’ān alluding to them perhaps? (unfortunately the Elchasaite apocrypha are not extant, and all we can deduce about them is from secondary literature such as Epiphanius of Salamis or Origen from their “counter-discourse” or polemics). As far as these sources tell us, the Elchasaites were practicing baptism, keeping prescriptions of the Mosaic law such as the Sabbath and circumcision and were praying towards Jerusalem; they rejected the letters of St. Paul and regarded the Holy Spirit to be female.

### Khalfallah

Ce passage aiderait à affiner la “méthode argumentative” qui consiste à étudier les textes à travers l’analyse des structures argumentatives (polémique, réfutation, démonstration...). Cf. Azaiez 2012 sur les questions argumentatives. Notre but ici est d’examiner la stratégie du Coran lorsqu’il décrit une catégorie de ses adversaires dont il ne présente pas, délibérément, l’identité. Une fois ces traits réunis, nous brosserons un portrait général de l’Adversaire- type. On verra ensuite s’il s’agit d’un adversaire archétypique ou d’un ennemi historique. Autrement dit, le Coran dessine-il le portrait des détracteurs, bien identifiés par les récits historiques, ou au contraire, il en dessine un visage universel? La question philosophique qui sous-tend cette courte analyse est de savoir comment la Parole de Dieu intervient dans l’Histoire et quelles sont les lignes de clivage entre l’immanence et la transcendance. Voici les traits distinctifs des adversaires : [1] Ils prétendent que Dieu n’a que des filles, alors qu’eux, ont des garçons. [2] Dieu a attribué aux anges le sexe féminin. [3] Ils sont des gens d’*ifq* (imposture, affabulation...) [4] Ils prétendent qu’Allah engendre des enfants. [5] Ils ne possèdent pas la capacité de produire des « jugements » justes. [6] Ils ne se remémorent pas. [7] Ils ne se basent sur aucune preuve évidente. [8] Ils ne sont pas sincères. [9] Ils prétendent que Dieu a un lien de filiation avec les *Ĝinns*. [10] Ils auront l’Enfer comme rétribution. [11] Ils espèrent avoir une gloire (*dīkr*), comme celle

des Anciens. [12] Ils précipitent l'avènement du châtement divin. [13] Ils auront une matinée funeste.

Ces remarques s'imposent : [1] Ces versets ne mentionnent pas les adversaires de manière explicite ; ils ne disent rien ni sur leur religion, leur noms, identité, appartenance... Selon le cas, il s'agirait des juifs, chrétiens ou des impies de Qurayš. Mais, ce silence est voulu, car il fait partie de cette description qui rompt avec l'histoire et installe un modèle universel. [2] Le Coran rapporte sans gêne leurs discours blasphématoires et ce dans le but de les ridiculiser. Les Docteurs de Loi en ont déduit une règle: *naqlu l-kufr laysa kufran* (reproduire des paroles blasphématoires n'est pas un blasphème). [3] Ce passage est construit selon le célèbre style d'*iltifāt*, qui permet de passer du discours direct au discours indirect, de tenir un dialogue avec les adversaires (polémiquer, répondre, réfuter, argumenter...). [4] Dieu parle uniquement au pluriel.

### Madigan

The tone of this segment somehow recalls for me the last chapters of the book of Job, where God takes Job to task for what he has been saying and challenges him on his knowledge and powers. In the Biblical text the confrontation is directly between God and Job, whereas in this *sūra* the prophet is told to do the questioning (*fa-staftihim*) in v. 149 as he has also been commanded to do earlier in v. 11. However, in the very next verse the prophet is cut out of the conversation and God takes over direct address to the interlocutors. The divine impatience with those who refuse to acknowledge God's messengers is brought out repeatedly in this *sūra* with the refrain (occurring 43 times in the Qur'ān) *a-fa-lā ...* (will they not then ...?). In this passage at v. 155 it is *a-fa-lā taḍakkārūna* (will they not, then, reflect?). Similar exasperation is often expressed by the repeated *la'allakum*, or *la'allahum*, which occurs 118 times in the Qur'ān. The tangle of not always announced speakers (e.g., at v. 164) gives a wonderfully dramatic feel to this passage, suggesting its origins in oral performance.

### Pregill

This passage's strong thematic and linguistic symmetry with the opening verses of the *sūra*, along with the closing invocations, demonstrate that the chapter is a unitary composition and should thus be read as thematically coherent. This indicates to me that the extended denunciation of the raising of the Daughters to the status of deities here at the end of the chapter must be interpreted in light of the initial references to good and bad angels. The implication would seem to be that the Daughters are essentially divinized angels and not pagan goddesses, as Hawting (1999) demonstrates. One wonders if there is also a distant echo here of the Christian claim that pagan deities are actually demons (that is, fallen angels). This provokes the question I raised in my comments on the last passage (QS 32) of whether we should under-

stand the Daughters not only as angels or quasi-angelic intermediaries, but actually as linked with (or the same variety of being as) the satans and *ǧinns*.

The challenge to the Prophet's interlocutors to bring a *kitāb* as warrant for their claims about the Daughters is provocative, since the witness of the Hebrew scriptures would in fact confirm that angels are not deities (at least as the Biblical passages with the divine council are generally interpreted), just as the witness of the New Testament would largely confirm that Jesus is not God but rather only the Word/Logos or its incarnation, as he is in the Qur'ān. This links the passage at hand with the larger Qur'ānic discourse about *tahrīf*, which in the context of the Qur'ān itself seems to signify the erroneous interpretation of scripture by Jews and Christians rather than their corruption through interpolation and omission and the like, as the later exegetical tradition has it.

Here the objectors say that they have not received a warning before – *law anna 'indanā dīkran min al-awwalīn* – which is suggestive given that in other places, the Qur'ān itself is likened to a message that has been heard of old (see QS 22 and 25). Is the Qur'ānic message something old (i. e., *asāfir al-awwalīn*) or something really new?

### Reynolds

In vv. 151–52 the Qur'ān polemicizes against those who say that God has “begotten” (*walada allāh*), apparently, “daughters.” This might be compared to those passages (Q 2:116; 10:68; 18:4; 19:88; 21:26; 23:91; 72:3) where the Qur'ān polemicizes against those who say that God has “taken a son” (*ittahada llāhu walad*), passages often imagined to be refutations of Christians, although *walad* could be understood in the general sense as “offspring.” The similarity of these refuted theological propositions is curious. The key question, examined in detail by Azaiez (2015) is the nature of the Qur'ān's “counter-discourse.” Should we imagine that any of these quotations reflect real opponents and things those opponents really said? Is it not plausible (although perhaps impossible to prove) that the Qur'ān has instead created theological opponents in order to articulate its own theological positions by way of refutation?

### Rippin

Despite all the significant, interesting and difficult aspects of this passage, my attention here was drawn to the little word *sāha* in v. 177. I was struck that translations try to make this specific – “backyard” (although in colloquial English I suppose that could be pretty general) or “courtyard,” certainly the meaning given to the word in the dictionaries (“the open space in a house”). Yet the context tells us nothing and the image of God's punishment descending into one's backyard seems to miss what would better be taken as a metaphor (e. g., “coming in one's direction,” “taking aim at someone”). This is the only time the root is used in the Qur'ān and, while the word is insignificant and is easily glossed over, it does demonstrate the challenges of

studying the Qurʾān outside the context of the tradition. That said, it's tempting to suggest that the text has been mis-read and this should be *nāḥiya* (a word which Lane [1863: IV, 184] notes could be taken as a synonym of *sāḥa*), a more common word for just a general direction. However, ironically perhaps, that is no easier a reading since that root is also not found in the Qurʾān (as noted by Brunschwig [1956, 24] in his classic article on vocabulary not used in the Qurʾān).

### Sirry

The Qurʾān criticizes unbelievers for their belief that God has daughters on a number of different occasions (Q 37:149–154; 16:57–59; 17:40; 43:16–20; 52:39; 53:19–23). In the passage under discussion, the daughters of God were thought to be angelic or celestial beings who acted as intercessors between God and humanity. In Q 37:153–54, the Qurʾān complains that the unbelievers have ascribed to God preference of daughters over sons. Compare with Q 16:57–59, where the Qurʾān uses logic to undermine the association of females with God by juxtaposing this belief with the typical reaction when one hears the news of the birth of female: “When one of them brought news of a female, his face darkens and he is filled with anger.” It is unthinkable that they ascribe to God what they hate for themselves. However, this criticism can be extended as polemics against Christians: Does the Christian God have a son, while the Arab God only has daughters? The Qurʾān seems reluctant to state explicitly the gender of angels: “Those who do not believe in the hereafter name the angels with female names” (v. 53:27). Is the identification of angels as the daughters of God a product of the Arab culture? It seems that there is no evidence in the post-Biblical literature that identifies the angels as female. For Hawting, however, the Qurʾānic accusation of its opponents’ belief (that angels are God’s female offspring) simply reflects a “polemical statement” (1999: 130–149).

### Tengour

Cette dernière partie de la sourate *al-Ṣāffāt* a donné lieu, dans les sources post-coraniques, à des interprétations que l'historien aura du mal à reprendre sans quelques réserves. Les croyances prêtées *a posteriori* aux adversaires mecquois de Muḥammad à partir de ce passage entrent en contradiction d'une part avec ce que la même parole affirme en d'autres moments, et de l'autre avec ce que nous savons du contexte social de l'Arabie du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Pour en comprendre la teneur, il faudrait sans doute replacer ce passage dans le contexte de polémique où il s'est dit, le mettre en chronologie avec des passages analogues, comme ceux de Q. 16:57; 17:40; 42:49; 43:16; 52:39, et tenir compte du fait qu'il s'agit là de propos d'adversaires qui ont été rapportés par la parole coranique dans le seul but de les dénoncer et que les Mecquois n'ont la parole qu'indirectement.

Si l'on considère l'opposition filles/fils dont il est nettement question au début de cette séquence (vv. 149–153), on constate que le Coran en rend toujours compte à

travers l'expression : *banāt/banūn*, filles/fils, ou bien *'ināt/banūn*, femelles/fils. Une telle opposition est loin d'être fortuite dans une société tribale et patriarcale où une progéniture exclusivement féminine était négativement perçue. On peut supposer que dans le contexte de polémique ambiant entre Muḥammad et ses dénégateurs mecquois, ceux-ci, excédés, aient pu lui rétorquer que son Seigneur avait une préférence pour les filles ou était tout juste bon à engendrer des filles – lui-même, n'était-il pas le père de filles ? L'accusation est jugée comme étant totalement absurde par la parole coranique, ce qui *a contrario* confirme que l'opposition filles/fils constituait bel et bien un trait de mentalité dans l'Arabie d'alors.

Il est à remarquer aussi que ce que la parole coranique nie, en la présentant à la fois comme étant mensongère et absurde, c'est la fonction procréatrice ou adoptante d'*Allāh*. Ce passage devra être mis en chronologie avec ceux de Q 6:101; 72:3 et 112:3, où l'idée qu'*Allāh* ait engendré quoi que ce soit est également repoussée. Ce thème apparaît dans le Coran vers le milieu de la période mecquoise et s'accompagne d'une mise en avant de plus en plus nette de la figure d'*Allāh*, en même temps que d'un évincement progressif des autres déités locales.

### Tesei

I agree with other commentators that the polemic about the Daughters is essentially angelological. This seems to be related to the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:2–4—and notably to the identification of the “sons of God” with the Watchers. The unparalleled references to female angels (however, cf. the Christian heresiologists' reports on the Elchasites listed in Klijn & Reinink 1973: 265–7), and to daughters alongside the sons of God, could be either functional to the polemic (i. e., representation of female deities as angels) or reflect a local syncretic cult.

The reference to the *ġinns* in the frame of this polemic also points to the rejection of mythemes from the Watchers story. The lineage (*nasab*) between God and the *ġinns* which the Qur'ān holds against its opponents (Q 37:158, cf. Q 6:100) recalls the Enochic myth on the origins of demons—described as spirits emanating from the Watchers' bastard progeny (i. e., the Giants) destroyed in the Flood. From the Qur'ān's perspective, to accept the Watchers' status of “sons of God” and the story of their demoniac offspring, would imply the establishment of a lineage between the latter and God—who would appear as a kind of grand-parent of the demons. The Qur'ān actually refers to a different etiology on the origins of demons, which would have pre-existed the creation of the man. *Ġinns* existed as such already before the rebellion of Satan (cf. Tesei QS 2).

The rejection of the Enochic myth as part of a religious quarrel is not peculiar to the Qur'ān. Christian authors as Ephrem and Jerome had already done the same in the cadre of their anti-Manichaean polemic. Still previously, other Christian polemicists (e. g., Lactantius) used the myth of the Watchers' demonic offspring (though without rejecting its “historicity”) to argue against pagan cults (on this point see also Crone QS 41). From this perspective, it is interesting to note that the Syriac

term *genyātā* (plur. of *gny*, “demon”) is used in several passages of the Peshitta to designate idols (e. g., 1 Sam 7:3–4, 12:10, 31:10; 2 King 5:24; Isa 1:29, 32:02,). The same use of the term occurs in Jacob of Serugh’s homilies in the framework of anti-Jewish polemic (e. g., *Hom. Against the Jews* V, 206, 264; VI, 56). Furthermore, the related Aramaic term *gny’k* occurs in Targum Jonathan on Isa 65:3 & 66:17 to describe a pagan altar. Very relevant is also Lactantius’ reference to the myth of the Watchers, and in particular his utterance that pagans venerate demons as “terrestrial gods” and that these demons “took for themselves the name of *genii*, for thus they translate the word *daemonas* into Latin” (cf. VanderKam 1996: 84–5). This last statement is quite enigmatic. It is actually unclear why demons should take for themselves a Latin name to translate the Greek word *daemon*. It is tempting to speculate that Lactantius is trying to provide an explanation to the Syro-Aramaic *gny* and that for assonance he connected it to the Latin *genius*—which incidentally has a similar meaning. In this case we would have a hint that a term related to the Arabic *ǧinn* was already associated to the Enochic mytheme of demons.