

## QS 36 Q 44:43 – 57

44.43 The Zaqqum tree  
44.44 shall be the food of the grave sinner,  
44.45 Like molten brass, boiling in stomachs  
44.46 like boiling water.  
44.47 “Seize him, and hurl him into the pit of hell  
44.48 Then pour over his head a torment of boiling water.  
44.49 Taste it, you who are mighty and noble!  
44.50 Here it is, that which you used to doubt!”  
44.51 But the pious shall be in a dwelling secure,  
44.52 Amidst gardens and springs,  
44.53 Clothed in silk and brocade, face to face.  
44.54 And, too, We married them to spouses with dark and large eyes.  
44.55 Therein they call for every kind of fruit, in peace of mind.  
44.56 Therein they do not taste death, except for the first death,  
And He has spared them the torment of hell – a favor from your Lord.  
44.57 This in truth is the greatest of triumphs.

44.43 Certes l’arbre de Zakkûm  
44.44 sera la nourriture du grand pécheur.  
44.45 Comme du métal en fusion; il bouillonnera dans les ventres  
44.46 comme le bouillonnement de l’eau surchauffée.  
44.47 Qu’on le saisisse et qu’on l’emporte en plein dans la fournaise;  
44.48 qu’on verse ensuite sur sa tête de l’eau bouillante comme châtement.  
44.49 Goûte! Toi [qui prétendait être] le puissant, le noble.  
44.50 Voilà ce dont vous doutiez.  
44.51 Les pieux seront dans une demeure sûre,  
44.52 parmi des jardins et des sources,  
44.53 Ils porteront des vêtements de satin et de brocart et seront placés face à face.  
44.54 C’est ainsi! Et Nous leur donnerons pour épouses des houris aux grands yeux.  
44.55 Ils y demanderont en toute quiétude toutes sortes de fruits.  
44.56 Ils n’y goûteront pas à la mort sauf leur mort première. Et [Allah] les protégera du châtement de la Fournaise,  
44.57 c’est là une grâce de ton Seigneur. Et c’est là l’énorme succès.

سورة الدخان  
طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ (44) كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ (45) كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيمِ (46) خُذُوهُ فَاعْتَلُوهُ إِلَىٰ سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ (47) ثُمَّ صُبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ (48) ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ (49) إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ (50) إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ (51) فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (52) يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ (53) كَذَلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ (54) يَدْخُلُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ (55) لَا يَدْخُلُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتُ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (56) فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (57)

### Azaiez

Quel sens donner au terme *zaqqûm*? Une réponse possible se déduirait d’une analyse structurelle et rhétorique de la séquence où s’inscrit ce vocable. Comme le souligne Guillaume Dye, nous sommes face à une forme spéculaire (deux parties du texte en opposition se font face). En analysant rhétoriquement une autre séquence où apparaît le terme *zaqqûm* (Q 56:41–54), on découvre que le terme qui lui répond et lui fait face symétriquement est *samûm*. En rhétorique sémitique, on parlera alors de paronomase. On peut tout à fait émettre l’hypothèse qu’il s’agit d’un terme fictif qui

aurait pour rôle unique de fonctionner comme rime tout en ayant la particularité de frapper l'esprit par son obscurité sémantique.

### Dye

Discours eschatologique, construit en deux parties : les vv. 43–49 décrivent le sort des pécheurs, les vv. 50–57 celui des pieux. Noter le parallélisme *duq* (v. 49) / *yadūqūna* (v. 56).

Le texte est composé de manière spéculaire. Les vv. 43–44 décrivent la nourriture (élément *solide*) des pécheurs, et le v. 55 celle des justes. Les vv. 47–48 décrivent la demeure des pécheurs (une fournaise dans laquelle on verse un *liquide* bouillant sur les condamnés), et les vv. 51–52 celle des pieux, où se trouvent jardins et *sources*.

On a probablement exagéré le caractère proprement « arabe » de ces descriptions. Après tout, la description coranique du paradis est très proche de celle des *Hymnes sur le paradis* d'Éphrem (Andrae 1955: 151 ff.). Quant à celle de l'enfer, elle se fonde sur des *topoi* bibliques et évangéliques bien connus. Restent deux problèmes.

D'abord, l'arbre de Zaqqūm (v. 43), que l'on rencontre dans d'autres passages (Q 37:62–68, Q 56:52—à l'indéfini; voir aussi Q 17:60). L'étymologie est obscure. Est-ce un mot rare, ou étranger, voire un terme inventé ? La rareté du mot contribue à frapper l'imagination de l'auditoire.

Ensuite, les fameuses houris (v. 54). Je ne sais si Luxenberg (2007a: 247–283) a raison dans ses émendations: la principale difficulté de son hypothèse (ou de celle, peut-être plus convaincante, de Van Reeth 2006) est qu'il faut réinterpréter un nombre assez conséquent de passages *différents*, dont tous ne contiennent pas l'expression *ḥūr 'in* (Q 78:31–34 ; Q 55:56–58). D'un autre côté – et cela ne relève ni du puritanisme ni de la polémique interreligieuse –, il faut reconnaître que la thèse des houris a quelque chose de saugrenu (quid des croyantes qui entreront au paradis avec leur époux ?). Leur présence dans les passages concernés (ici-même, et en Q 52:19–20) est étrange, puisqu'elles apparaissent, de manière assez inattendue, dans un propos insistant sur la quiétude, les fruits et la boisson, comme chez Éphrem (*Hymnes sur le paradis* 5:6 ; 9:6). La possibilité que les images d'Éphrem (notamment *Hymnes sur le paradis* 7:18) aient été mal comprises (sous l'influence de conceptions zoroastriennes ?), soit par le rédacteur du texte (les houris seraient alors bien dans le Coran), soit par la tradition musulmane postérieure, dans la mise en place des points diacritiques et des voyelles, et dans l'interprétation du texte, me paraît une hypothèse plausible.

### El-Badawi

A characteristic description of hell and paradise, with the phrases *šağarat al-zaqqūm* and *ḥūr 'in* of particular interest. Do we know what the word *zaqqūm* means?

Luxenberg's analysis of *ḥūr 'in* as "white grapes" is too reductionist (or polemical) and problematic to be accepted as is. While it is quite clear that the Qur'ānic

description of *ḥūr ʿin* does not refer to white grapes but rather women, it is equally clear that the description of Q 56 taps into the imagery of the bridal chamber (see Matt 9:15) in Syriac literature, e.g., Aphrahat's *Demonstration on Death and the Last Days*. It is not uncommon to find descriptions of paradise associated with hanging fruit in both the Qur'ān and the extant corpus of Syriac literature, Ephrem, "Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de paradiso und contra Julianum," 19, 18 (Hymn 5.15). Yousef Kouriyhe systematically discusses the role of the Qur'ānic *ḥūr ʿin*—which Luxenberg fails to do—and the relationship to its counterpart in Syriac literature, esp. Jacob of Serugh's *mēmre*. Kouriyhe ultimately corroborates the Qur'ānic notion of the term while staying true to its conceptual, Syriac precedent. He argues that the *ḥūr/ḥūrāyē* are symbols—hanging fruit—of virgin female companions for which desert hermits longed, but to whom they could only allude. (See generally Kouriyhe 2007).

### Grodzki

Already Josef Horovitz (1923: 1–16) has pointed to the oddity of the traditional idea that godwary men will be rewarded in heaven by houris while their earthly wives will also be there with them. There is no doubt that wives will accompany their husbands in paradise (Q 36:56, 43:70). Or shall perhaps the v. 54 of Q 44 be understood according to the New Testamental *those who are regarded as worthy to share in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage* (Luke 20:35), or is there another way of understanding this apparent ambiguity?

### Pregill

A compelling example of Qur'ānic imprecation. The rhythm and meter seem to heighten the urgency of the dreadful warning contained in these lines. The tone and style of passages like this are so different from those of the longer narrative or legislative passages (or, for that matter, from that of some of the apocalyptic and mantic passages found towards the end of the corpus) that for me the question of multiple points of origin seems inevitable, though scholars seldom broach this topic directly. Form criticism of the Qur'ān almost always proceeds through the hermeneutic lens of the *sīra* tradition; that is, our understanding of the evolution of Qur'ānic discourse is typically anchored in the biography of a particular individual, which then seems to limit the possibilities for formal analysis considerably. (I understand Wansbrough's groundbreaking critique of the *sīra* tradition as *Heilsgeschichte* as an early attempt to overcome the limits of this approach).

Neuwirth's pioneering attempts to analyze Qur'ānic genre in terms of shifting communal priorities have stimulated an important hermeneutic shift from the presumed individual composer of the Qur'ān to the conjectured audience that supplied its primary context of reception; even here, though, we seem to be constrained by the Meccan-Medinan paradigm. What would be the requisite methodological commit-

ments for the field to advance to a serious and disciplined form criticism of the Qur'ān that was not primarily grounded in the *sīra* tradition?

V. 49: I read this as ironic: *anta al-'azīzu al-karīm*, not “you [were in life]...” as it is often rendered, but rather a question – “So you think you are ... ?”

### Reynolds

The God of the Qur'ān is being sarcastic when He declares v. 49: “Taste [the boiling water], you who are mighty and noble!” Evidently, the person being tortured with boiling water would not exactly feel mighty or noble. Unlike Khalidi (whose translation I have cited), most translators get rid of the sarcasm. Quli Qara'i has “you are the [self-styled] mighty and noble”; Muḥammad Asad, “thou who [on earth] hast considered thyself so mighty, so noble”; Hilali-Khan, “Verily, you were (pretending to be) the mighty, the generous.” In so doing they seem to underestimate the Qur'ān's rhetorical creativity.

### Rippin

The word *muhl* in v. 45 is generally glossed as some kind of molten metal: lead, brass, copper (the choice being metals that it might be assumed would be known as subject to casting at the time perhaps). The word is also used in Q 18:29 (scalding the faces), Q 70:8 (a description of the sky on the last day) [translators sometimes even vary their metal among these three usages]. The description of it in v. 46 that the *mulh* is boiling in the bellies of the sinners “like boiling water” obviously does not help with the specification of the image. Schreiner (1977: 111–13) suggests hot oil (also found in some translations), reminiscent of ancient punishments and warfare and connected to post-Biblical Hebrew usage of *mohal*.

### Tesei

The idea that the sinners will undergo a second death is related to similar Biblical concepts. The expression “second death” often occurs in the Targums, where it designates the punishments the wicked will experience. For example, TgJ on Jeremiah 51:39 (cf. 51:57) states: “they shall die the second death (אָנְיָהּ אָנְיָהּ) and shall not live in the world to come.” In much the same way, TgJ on Isaiah 65:6 affirms: “Their punishment will be in Gehenna ... [I will] deliver the bodies to the second death” (cf. TgJ on Isaiah 22:14 and on Isa 65:15). The same image occurs four times in the Book of Revelation (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8), where the second death designates the punishment of sinners, or the Gehenna itself: “this is the second death (ὁ θάνατος ὁ δευτέρως), the lake of fire” (20:14). Furthermore, the trope of the second death is prominent in Syriac literature. Both Aphrahat and Ephrem speak of the second death (*mawtā tinyānā*) as the eschatological punishment of sinners, while Babai's *Life of George* refers to the second death of the Origenist Ḥenana (on this point cf.

Reinink 1999: 183, n. 65). The expression is less common in Rabbinical literature. Nevertheless, the attention might be focused on an interesting passage of the *Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer* (34), that infers: “Every nation who says that there is a second god, I will kill with a second death, wherein there is no resurrection” (quoted in Williams 2000: 139). Elsewhere the Qur’ān manifestly refers to much the same imagery (cf. Q 17:75; 37:58–59; 40:11).

### Zellentin

The *zaqqūm* tree here is described as “the food of the sinful” (v. 44) which will boil in their bellies “like molten copper, boiling like boiling water.” (v. 45–6). Afterwards, they are dragged “to the middle of Gehenna (*sawā’i l-ğāḥīmi*)” in order to receive the punishment of boiling water (v. 47–8). What can we learn about the geography of hell from this verse? Elsewhere, the *zaqqūm* tree *taḥruḡu*, “emerges,” from the “root of Gehenna” (*aṣli l-ğāḥīmi*), the wrongdoers will eat from it, “they will take a solution of scalding water, then indeed their retreat will be toward Gehenna” (Q 37:64). In contrast to our passage, this description inverts the order of events: here, the sinners move towards hell only *after* they are punished with boiling water. What the two passages share is the notion that the tree does not itself stand at the “middle” or “root” of hell, from which it conversely emerges: in both texts, the sinners move towards hell after encountering the tree, presupposing their own initial externality.

The tree’s outward position invites us to reconsider Geiger, who noted that the Babylonian Talmud understands two *šny hr hbrzl*, “thorn-palms of the iron mountain” (*Mishna Sukkah* 3:1) to be located “in the Valley of Hinam” (*bgv’ bn hnm*); the trees mark a “gate of Gehenna” (*pṯḥ ṣl ghynm*, *bSukkah* 22b and *Eruvin* 19a). If we assume that the Qur’ān presupposes familiarity with this rabbinic tradition, then its depiction of the *zaqqūm* tree “emerging” from Gehenna would likely also mark its position at the *entrance* of Gehenna in the Qur’ān, whilst the sinners are dragged in only *after* consuming from the tree—if so, we can trace a remarkable development of rabbinic lore in its Arabian context. The pertinence of the rabbinic tradition can be corroborated. The punishment by boiling water, for example, has a parallel not only in Q 11:39–40 and Q 23:27, but also in the rabbinic tradition presupposed there (see my comments on QS 14). In addition to the tree’s association with Gehenna and its situation liminal to it in both the Qur’ān and the Talmud, we should also note that the Hebrew term *šnh*, denoting the tree at the entrance of Gehenna, indeed describes any of various palms with spiny trunks, a fact which in turn illuminates the Qur’ān’s statement that the *zaqqūm* tree’s “sphates are as if they were devil’s heads” (Q 37:65).

Intriguingly, yet more ambiguously, we should note that the Arabic *zaqqūm* may well have an affinity with Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *zyqt’*, “goad” (cf. Syriac *zqt’*, “sting,” “goad,” and Akkadian *zyqtw*, “barb,” “point”). Likewise, the fact that the Talmud *šnh* tree grows on an “iron mountain” allows for a loose association with its ef-

fect on those who consume it in the Qur'ān, acting like molten copper in their bellies (v. 45). Using molten metal as a punishment is also recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 92b); here, molten gold is suggested as a punishment for Nebuchadnezzar.

Hence, the Qur'ān's tree seems to integrate a range of rabbinic traditions, perhaps broadened in light of similar Persian apocalyptic traditions. For example, a woman guilty of infanticide (or abortion) stands in hell in molten copper as a punishment in the Pahlavi text *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* (Vahman 1986, 40:5). Furthermore, molten copper (v. 45) is poured on the breast of Ādurbād as a religious test (Vahman 1986, 2:12 and Macuch 1987).

*Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* is of course a post-Qur'ānic composition, and it is difficult to relate the Pahlavi material to the Qur'ān. Should we hence also consider the use of the “cursed tree” as a *fitnah*, a “test” or “temptation,” in Q 17:60, in light of the test of Ādurbād's true religion? This would make sense if we equate this “cursed tree” with the *zaqqūm* trees and with its effect like molten copper, not a very long stretch in my mind. Moreover, one could pursue the possibility whether there is any relationship between Pahlavi *zaxm* (i.e., *ztm* or *z'hm*, “wound, pain, torment”) and Arabic *zaqqūm*, which, unlike the Aramaic *zyqt'* has a final *mīm*, but of course there is no medial *qāf* here, and no dense web of corroborating intertextual references, suggesting an Aramaic rather than a Persian etymology.