

# *The Talmudic Dilemma*

[My YouTube Channel](#)

## Quick TL;DR version of the argument

The Quran claims it is God's direct, unique revelation given only through prophets (Surah 42:51; Surah 4:163–165), and Mohammad is presented as the final prophet (33:40). Yet large, specific passages in the Quran closely parallel rabbinic Midrash and Talmudic material (Mishnah ~200 AD; Gemara 300–500 AD) that was circulating in late antiquity. That creates a dilemma: either God revealed truth through Jewish rabbis who were not prophets for centuries — which contradicts the Quran's own doctrine — or Mohammad heard and incorporated human Jewish and Christian material and presented it as divine revelation. The simplest, historically coherent explanation is the latter: the Quran contains human-sourced material. Which undermines the claim that the Quran is wholly divine and inimitable.

## **Core logical framework (the dilemma in 6 steps)**

1. Islamic Claim: Allah reveals only via prophets (Surah 42:51; Surah 4:163–165); Mohammad is the last prophet (Surah 33:40; Sahih al-Bukhari 3455); No prophets between Isa and Mohammad (Sahih al-Bukhari 3442).
2. Historical Fact: Rabbinic literature (Mishnah/Gemara—the Talmudic layer) was produced centuries before Mohammad and circulated orally in Near Eastern Jewish communities.
3. Textual Overlap: The Quran contains passages that closely parallel rabbinic/Midrashic stories, legal maxims, and phrasings (e.g., Surah 5:32 parallel to a Mishnah/Midrashic teaching about the value of life).
4. Transmission Gap: If no prophets existed between Jesus and Mohammad (*fatrah*), rabbis were not prophets — yet rabbinic material appears in the Quran.
5. Two options: (A) God used rabbis (non-prophets) as the vessels of revelation for centuries — which contradicts the Quran's theology; or (B) Mohammad heard human material and integrated it into the Quran — which means the Quran is not purely divine.
6. Occam's Razor: (B) is historically and explanatorily simpler. Making Islam false.

It's not just that the Quran copies information from other sources (Jewish or otherwise). It's that the Quran is copying *false, manmade, contradictory* information **as if it was the word of God**.

## Long version of the argument

### The Talmudic Dilemma Syllogism

#### Premise 1:

Islam teaches that *wahy* (divine revelation) is granted only through prophets, and that no prophets were sent between Isa (Jesus) and Mohammad.

- Supported by Sahih al-Bukhari 3442 which affirms the prophetic line ceased after Isa until Mohammad.

#### Premise 2:

Islam also holds that the Jews after Isa were a misguided people who corrupted revelation, followed man-made traditions, and thus were not rightly guided.

- Supported by Surah 2:79, 2:88, 2:91, 4:46, 5:13, 5:41-44, 9:30, Sahih Muslim 2669a, Sahih al-Bukhari 7320, Sunan Ibn Majah 3994, Sunan at-Tirmidhi Hadith 2954.

#### Premise 3:

The Talmud and Midrash were written and compiled *after* the prophetic period (roughly 200–500 AD), by rabbinic scholars—precisely during the era Islam calls a prophetic void (*fatrah*).

#### Premise 4:

Many Quranic stories and motifs (e.g., Abraham destroying idols, Solomon commanding animals and jinn, the cow narrative in Surah 2, Harut and Marut, Iblis and Adam and Eve, Cain's Raven, 7 heavens, etc) closely parallel Talmudic and Midrashic accounts that have no biblical origin but do appear in these rabbinic writings, often times word for word.

#### Premise 5:

If the Talmudic and Midrashic materials were composed by post-biblical rabbis—who were *not* prophets, and who Islam says were *misguided*—then they *cannot* be a source of *wahy* (divine revelation).

#### Premise 6:

Yet, those same non-prophetic, “corrupted” rabbinic sources contain narratives and teachings that appear in the Quran centuries later.

#### Conclusion (The Dilemma):

Either:

- (A) Mohammad or his contemporaries learned these stories from Jewish or Christian oral traditions, which means the Quran contains human-derived material and is not purely divine,  
**or**
- (B) Allah preserved and endorsed post-prophetic Jewish traditions, produced by a community Islam says was misguided, as *wahy*. Which contradicts the Quran's own theology of revelation and its critique of Jewish tradition.

**Corollary:**

If truth and revelation (*huda* and *wahy*) exist only through prophets, then the presence of non-prophetic rabbinic material in the Quran demonstrates that its source must be human transmission, not divine revelation. Thus Islam is false.

## Talmudic History

**1. Background:**

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, Jewish religious life shifted from Temple-based worship to study and interpretation of the Torah. The rabbis (teachers of the law) emerged as the new religious authorities, preserving Jewish tradition through oral teaching — what came to be called the Oral Torah (*Torah shebe'al peh*, תורה שבעל־פה).

**2. The Mishnah (c. 200 AD):**

The first major written version of this Oral Torah was the Mishnah, compiled around 200 AD by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi (Judah the Prince) in the land of Israel.

- It's written in Hebrew.
- It contains about 63 tractates (essays on specific subjects) covering Jewish law (*halakhah*), ethics, and ritual practice.
- Its purpose was to codify and preserve oral teachings threatened by dispersion and persecution.

**3. The Gemara (200–500 AD):**

Over the next few centuries, Jewish scholars in two major centers — Israel and Babylonia (modern Iraq) — studied and debated the Mishnah.

Their discussions, interpretations, and expansions were recorded as the Gemara.

There are two versions:

- Jerusalem Talmud – completed c. 400 AD.
- Babylonian Talmud – completed c. 500 AD and far more authoritative.

#### 4. The Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli):

Compiled by generations of rabbis known as the Amoraim (interpreters).

- Written mostly in Aramaic, with Hebrew sections.
- Consists of legal rulings (*halakhah*), moral teachings, parables, and folklore (*aggadah*).
- Functions as both a law code and a theological-philosophical commentary on how Jews should live out the Torah.

#### 5. Authority and Influence:

By the 6th century AD, the Babylonian Talmud became the central text of rabbinic Judaism, effectively replacing the Temple system and becoming the backbone of Jewish law and learning.

- Later rabbis (the Geonim and Rishonim) codified and commented on it, further solidifying its authority.
- It is not considered “scripture” (like the Torah) but is (sometimes) viewed as a divinely inspired interpretation and application of it — the living tradition of Sinai as preserved by the rabbis.

#### Summary:

Mishnah (c. 200 AD) = Written Oral Law.

Gemara (200–500 AD) = Rabbinic commentary on the Mishnah.

Together → Talmud, the central text of post-biblical Judaism.

Authors: Hundreds (possibly thousands) of rabbis (Mishnah=Tannaim and Gemara=Amoraim), not prophets.

Nature: Human interpretation of divine law — part legal code, part theological reflection, part folklore

### Could Jews have had true revelation in the Talmud (*Wayh*)?

There is **theological inconsistency** within Islamic categories of *wahy* (revelation), *huda* (guidance), and *aqI* (reason).

#### 1. What *wahy* means in Islam

*Wahy* (وَحْيٍ) is divine revelation — direct or mediated communication from Allah to His prophets. According to the Quran (16:43, 21:7) revelation is **restricted to prophets**:

*“We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed (nūḥī ilayhim)”*

Angels or dreams can transmit *wahy*, but never ordinary reasoning or communal tradition. The Quran claims all true divine knowledge, including scripture and wisdom, comes *only* through *wahy* (Surah 42:51):

*“It is not fitting for any human that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration (wahy) or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger.”*

So, within Islamic theology the truths of religion is *wahy* and *wahy* can only be given via a prophet.

## 2. Can truth exist outside *wahy* in Islam?

The short answer, **no** — not in a salvific or theological sense anyway.

- **Reason (‘aql)** in Islamic thought can recognize *signs of God* (fitra, natural intuition), but it cannot *produce* new revealed truth.
- Classical theologians like al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah both affirm that ‘aql supports *wahy* but never equals or replaces it. Al-Ghazali goes as far as to condemn those who try to reason and replace *wahy* as worthy of death since Allah is above the natural laws and logic.
- Quran 2:213 says Allah sent prophets “with truth” because mankind “differed.” That means without revelation, humans stray.

## 3. The *Fatrah* and *Hujjah* problem

Islam holds that Jesus (*Isa*) was a prophet, Mohammad was the next prophet after him, and between them, there was a **period of fatrah** (“interval with no prophet”). This can be found in Sahih al-Bukhari 3442:

*“I am the nearest of all the people to the son of Mary, and all the prophets are paternal brothers, and there has been no prophet between me and him (i.e. Jesus).”*

Therefore, any “new truths” that arose among the Jews in that time **cannot be revelation**, by Islamic definition.

The Ahl al-Fatrah (People of the Interval) are those who lived during the time that there were no prophets on Earth. This is roughly the **600-year period between Jesus and Mohammad** according to Muslim scholars. Since no prophet reached them, they cannot be judged by a revelation they never heard.

### How Muslims understand this:

School	Typical View
Ash‘ari / Maturidi (Sunni mainstream)	Such people are excused until a messenger reaches them (Q 17:15 – “ <i>We never punish until We have sent a messenger.</i> ”)

**Ibn Taymiyya / Ibn Qayyim**

They'll be tested on Judgment Day; if they obey God's command then, they enter Paradise.

**Mu'tazili**

Human reason alone can recognize God's oneness, so denial of it still brings guilt even without a prophet.

This doctrine was created to *deflect the question*: "Why were there centuries without revelation?"

It asserts divine justice even in prophetic silence and makes people be judged based on their own *Hujjah* ("Proof / Evidence"). In theology and law, *hujjah* is the binding proof by which God holds humans accountable. A messenger or revelation establishes *hujjah*; without it, moral responsibility is incomplete and judgement couldn't happen.

Surah 4:165 – "[Messengers were sent] so that people would have no *hujjah* against God after the messengers."

Until a prophet delivers God's message, no *hujjah* exists against that people — again reinforcing that divine punishment requires prior revelation.

From an Islamic-theological perspective:

- The existence of **Ahl al-Fatrah** means Islam already *acknowledges* a prophetic silence after Jesus.
- The concept of **hujjah** means no new divine proof reached people during that interval.
- Therefore, if the Quran or Mohammad's recitations show detailed knowledge of post-biblical Jewish material (like the Talmud), classical theology has to say one of two things:
  1. That material was **not revelation** (just human stories) — so Mohammad's knowledge of it came through ordinary means.

**Or**

  2. It somehow preserved divine truth from earlier prophets — which would complicate the doctrine of *fatrah* and *hujjah* by implying ongoing revelation without prophets.

Muslim theologians (Imams) typically choose (1): the rabbis were not prophets; their writings were human; revelation had indeed ceased until Mohammad. They do this to preserve the claim that Mohammad alone re-established divine revelation.

**4. Were the Jews rightly guided according to Islam when the Talmud was written?**

According to Islam, by the time the Talmud was being written and compiled, the Jews were already considered *misguided* and no longer on the path of true revelation.

### **Quran's view of Jews post-Torah**

The Quran constantly accuses Jews of altering scripture, following rabbis blindly, and corrupting revelation:

*"So woe to those who write the Book with their own hands then say, 'This is from Allah,' to exchange it for a small price..."* (Surah 2:79).

*"They distort words from their proper usages..."* (Surah 4:46).

These accusations clearly place rabbinic writings, like the Talmud, in the category of *man-made*, not divinely inspired. It is worth noting that these are from the Medinan period after Mohammad was already rejected and that Allah seems to affirm them in Surah 5:32.

### **No prophetic guidance after Jesus (Isa)**

As we just covered, Islam teaches there were no prophets between Jesus and Mohammad. That means the rabbis who authored the Mishnah and Gemara (core of the Talmud) could not have been receiving divine guidance.

### **Prophet Mohammad's statements about Jews**

Sunan at-Tirmidhi Hadith 2954 has Mohammad saying:

*"The Jews are those who Allah is wrath with, and the Christians have strayed."* (echoing Surah 1:7 the *ghayr al-maghdubi 'alayhim* often interpreted as Jews; ibn kathir, etc).

This shows that they knowingly rejected or distorted the truth. In Sahih Muslim 2669a (with similar accounts in Sahih al-Bukhari 7320 and Sunan Ibn Majah 3994):

*Mohammad says: You would tread the same path as was trodden by those before you inch by inch and step by step so much so that if they had entered into the hole of the lizard, you would follow them in this also. We said: Allah's Messenger, do you mean Jews and Christians (by your words) those before you"? He said: Who else (than those two religious groups)?*

Surah 4:46; Surah 2:79; Surah 3:78; Surah 5:64; Surah 3:181, etc also show that the Quran thinks Jews are not rightly guided.

These statements show that Mohammad & the Quran treat **Jewish religious leadership / community** as having **knowledge of earlier revelation** but failing to *implement* or *preserve* it correctly. Then by Islamic standards, when the Talmud was being produced, the Jews were *not*

*rightly guided*. They had no prophet, and their scholars were seen as corrupting God's law rather than preserving revelation.

Thus the Quran contains ideas found in a body of literature (the Talmud) that Islam says came from a community already *astray* and outside prophetic guidance.

## 5. Possible outcomes from Islamic Logic

If the Quran contains detailed parallels or verbatim material from the **Talmud** (compiled roughly 200–500 AD — i.e., squarely in the *fatrah*), they're left with four possibilities within Islamic theology:

Scenario	Consequence for Islamic theology
(A) The Talmud contains <i>wahy</i> (true revelation).	Contradicts 16:43, 21:7, 42:51 — because there was no prophet to receive it. That means Allah revealed after 'Isa but before Mohammad — breaking the <i>fatrah</i> doctrine.
(B) The Talmud is merely human reasoning.	Then how did later Quranic verses reproduce its content? If Mohammad quoted it, he's echoing man-made reasoning, not divine revelation.
(C) The Jews preserved earlier Mosaic or prophetic truth orally.	Then Islam's charge that Jews "corrupted or concealed" scripture (2:75, 2:79, 3:78, 5:13) is inconsistent; they would instead have transmitted genuine revelation.
(D) Allah allowed "some truths" to survive outside of revelation.	But that undermines the entire Quranic claim that guidance and knowledge come only through Allah's direct sending of prophets and angels (e.g. 3:164, 62:2). It also contradicts the Islamic denial of independent human reasoning producing divine truths.

If Jews, while not 'rightly guided', independently generated Talmudic concepts later repeated in the Quran — it implies true theological content existed **outside revelation**.

That is **impossible** under Islamic ontology of truth.

## 6. The contradiction summarized

1. Islam says *wahy* only comes through prophets.
2. No prophet existed between Jesus and Mohammad.
3. The Talmud (written in that period) contains material found later in the Quran.
4. Therefore, either:
  - the Jews somehow received revelation without a prophet (violates doctrine),  
**Or**
  - Mohammad copied from man-made sources (violates the Quran's claim of divine origin).

Either branch creates tension inside the Quranic framework.

## How the Quran uses the Talmud

The Quran constantly has Mohammad being accused of being a false prophet and just taking oral folklore and spinning it off as revelations from Allah. Relevant Quranic passages that create or acknowledge the accusation:

Q 16:103 — Quran records the accusation: “They say, ‘A human being teaches him.’” (defense that it’s ‘clear Arabic’).

Q 6:25, 8:31, 16:24, 23:83, 25:5, 27:68, 46:17, 68:15, 83:13 “These are nothing but fables of the ancients that he has had written down; they are dictated to him morning and evening.”

Q 21:5, 37:36, 52:33–34, 69:41–43 The Quran mentions accusations of fabrication, sorcery, or poetry.

They also show that the audience of Mohammad thought he was stealing from the Jews and Christians.

This brings up an obvious question, why did his audience accuse him of doing this so much if there is no truth to it? Let’s compare some passages from the Quran and from early Rabbinic Jewish sources.

In many cases, the Quranic wording mirrors rabbinic formulations more closely than it resembles Biblical Hebrew or Christian Gospel phrasing — indicating rabbinic (not biblical) influence. This is not vague moral overlap. This is the same story, in the same shape.

**Quran**

**Targum Sheni**

## Surah 27

15 And *we indeed gave knowledge to David and Solomon, and they said, Praise be to Allah, who has preferred us above many of his believing slaves.*

16 And Solomon was David's heir. And he said, O mankind, indeed, *we have been taught the language of birds, and have been given of all things. This surely is obvious favor.*

17 And *there were gathered together to Solomon his armies of the jinn and mankind, and of the birds, and they were set in battle order,*

18 Until, when they reached the valley of the ants, an ant exclaimed, O ants, enter your dwellings so that Solomon and his armies do not crush you without realizing.

19 And he smiled, laughing at her speech, and said, My Lord, make me thankful for your favor with which you have favored me and my parents, and to do good that will be pleasing to you, and include me among your righteous slaves.

20 And he searched among the birds and said, *How is it that I do not see the hoopoe, or is he among the absent?*

21 *I indeed will punish him with hard punishment or I indeed will kill him, or he indeed will bring me a clear excuse.*

22 *But he was not long in coming, and he said, I have found out what you do not understand, and I come to you from Sheba with sure news.*

23 *Indeed, I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given of all things, and hers is a mighty throne.*

24 *I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allah, and Satan makes their works seem good to them, and bars them from the way, so that they are not guided,*

25 So that they do not worship Allah, who brings forth the hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what you conceal and what you proclaim,

26 Allah, there is no God except him, the Lord of the mighty throne.

27 He said, We will see whether you speak truth or whether you are among the liars.

28 *Go with this my letter and throw it down to them, then turn away and see what they return,*

(51) Solomon, it must be remembered, *bore rule not only over men, but also over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, demons, spirits, and the spectres of the night. He knew the language of all of them and they understood his language.*

(52) When Solomon was of good cheer by reason of wine, *he summoned the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the creeping reptiles, the shades, the spectres, and the ghosts, to perform their dances before the kings, his neighbors, whom he invited to witness his power and greatness. The king's scribes called the animals and the spirits by name, one by one, and they all assembled of their own accord, without fetters or bonds, with no human hand to guide them.*

(53) *On one occasion the hoopoe was missed from among the birds. He could not be found anywhere. The king, full of wrath, ordered him to be produced and chastised for his tardiness. The hoopoe appeared and said: "O lord, king of the world, incline thine ear and hearken to my words. Three months have gone by since I began to take counsel with myself and resolve upon a course of action. I have eaten no food and drunk no water, in order to fly about in the whole world and see whether there is a domain anywhere which is not subject to my lord the king. and I found a city, the city of Kitor, in the East. Dust is more valuable than gold there, and silver is like the mud of the streets. Its trees are from the beginning of all time, and they suck up water that flows from the Garden of Eden. The city is crowded with men. On their heads they wear garlands wreathed in Paradise. They know not how to fight, nor how to shoot with bow and arrow. Their ruler is a woman, she is called the Queen of Sheba. If, now, it please thee, O lord and king, I shall gird my loins like a hero, and journey to the city of Kitor in the land of Sheba. Its kings I shall fetter with chains and its rulers with iron bands, and bring them all before my lord the king."*

(54) *The hoopoe's speech pleased the king. The clerks of his land were summoned, and they wrote a letter and bound it to the hoopoe's wing. The bird rose skyward, uttered his cry, and flew away, followed by all the other birds.*

(55) *And they came to Kitor in the land of Sheba. It was morning, and the queen had gone forth to pay worship to the sun. Suddenly the birds darkened his light. The queen raised her hand, and rent her garment, and was sore*

29 She said, O chieftains, indeed, there has been thrown to me a noble letter.

30 Indeed, it is from Solomon, and indeed, it is in the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful,

31 Do not exalt yourselves against me, but come to me as Muslims.

32 She said, O chieftains, pronounce for me in my case. I decide no case until you are present with me.

33 They said, We are lords of might and lords of great prowess, but it is for you to command, so consider what you will command.

34 She said, Indeed, kings, when they enter a township, ruin it and make the honor of its people shame. They will do this.

35 But indeed, I am going to send a present to them, and to see with what the messengers return.

36 So when he came to Solomon, he said, What? Would you help me with wealth? But what Allah has given me is better than what he has given you. No, it is you who rejoice in your gift.

37 Return to them. We indeed will come to them with armies that they cannot resist, and we will drive them out from there with shame, and they will be humiliated.

38 He said, O chiefs, which of you will bring me her throne before they come to me as Muslims? 39 An ifrit among the jinn said, I will bring it you before you can rise from your place. Indeed, I truly am strong and trusty for such work.

40 One with whom was knowledge of the book said, I will bring it you before your gaze returns to you. And when he saw it set in his presence, he said, This is of the bounty of my Lord, that he may test me whether I give thanks or am ungrateful. Whoever gives thanks only gives thanks for his own soul, and whoever is ungrateful, indeed, my Lord is absolute in independence, bountiful.

41 He said, Disguise her throne for her so that we may see whether she will be guided or be among those who are not rightly guided.

42 So when she came, it was said, Is your throne like this? She said, As if it were the very one. And, We were given the knowledge before her and we became Muslims.

astonished. Then the hoopoe alighted near her. Seeing that a letter was tied to his wing, she loosed it and read it. And what was written in the letter? "From me, King Solomon! Peace be with thee, peace with the nobles of thy realm! Know that God has appointed me king over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the demons, the spirits, and the spectres. All the kings of the East and the West come to bring me greetings. If thou wilt come and salute me, I shall show thee great honor, more than to any of the kings that attend me. But if thou wilt not pay homage to me, I shall send out kings, legions, and riders against thee. Thou askest, who are these kings, legions, and riders of King Solomon? The beasts of the field are my kings, the birds my riders, the demons, spirit, and shades of the night my legions. The demons will throttle you in your beds at night, while the beasts will slay you in the field, and the birds will consume your flesh."

(56) When the Queen of Sheba had read the contents of the letter, she again rent her garment, and sent word to her elders and her princes: "Know you not what Solomon has written to me?" They answered: "We know nothing of King Solomon, and his dominion we regard as naught." But their words did not reassure the queen. She assembled all the ships of the sea, and loaded them with the finest kinds of wood, and with pearls and precious stones. Together with these she sent Solomon six thousand youths and maidens, born in the same year, in the same month, on the same day, in the same hour all of equal stature and size, all clothed in purple garments. They bore a letter to King Solomon as follows: "From the city of Kitor to the land of Israel is a journey of seven years. As it is thy wish and behest that I visit thee, I shall hasten and be in Jerusalem at the end of three years."

(58) Benaiah conducted the queen to Solomon, who had gone to sit in a house of glass to receive her. The queen was deceived by an illusion. She thought the king was sitting in water, and as she stepped across to him she raised her garment to keep it dry. On her bared feet the king noticed hair, and he said to her: "Thy beauty is the beauty of a woman, but thy hair is masculine; hair is an ornament to a man, but it disfigures a woman."

43 And what she was inclined to worship instead of Allah hindered her, for she came among disbelieving people.

44 It was said to her, Enter the hall. And when she saw it, she thought it was a pool and bared her legs. He said, Indeed, it is a hall, made smooth, of glass. She said, My Lord, indeed, I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

## Quran

### Surah 20:85-96

85 He said, Indeed, we have tested your people in your absence, and **AsSamiri has misled them.**

87 They said, We did not break our promise with you of our own will, but **we were laden with the burdens of the ornaments of the people, then threw them, for that was what As-Samiri proposed.**

88 Then he produced for them a calf, of saffron color, which gave forth a lowing sound. And they called out, **This is your god and the god of Moses, but he has forgotten.**

94 He said, O son of my mother, do not clutch my beard or my head. **I was afraid that you would say, You have caused division among the children of Israel, and have not waited for my word.**

95 He said, And what do you have to say, **O Samiri?**

96 He said, I perceived what they did not perceive, so I seized a handful from the footsteps of the messenger, and then threw it in. **In this way my soul prompted me.**

97 He said, Then go. And indeed, in this life it is for you to say, **Do not touch me. And indeed, there is for you an appointment that you cannot break. Now look upon your god to which you have remained devoted. Indeed we will burn it and will scatter its dust over the sea.**

### Surah 7:145-150

145 And **we wrote for him upon the tablets the lesson to be drawn from all things and the explanation of all things, then, Hold it fast, and command your people, Take what is better in it. I will show you the abode of transgressors.**

146 I will turn away from my signs those who exalt themselves wrongfully on earth, and if they see each sign do not believe it, and if they see the way of righteousness do not choose it for a way, and if they see the way of error,

## Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 45:4-11

Aaron argued with himself, saying: If I say to Israel, Give ye to me gold and silver, they will bring it immediately; but behold I will say to them, Give ye to me the earrings of your wives, and of your sons, and forthwith the matter will fail, as it is said, "And Aaron said to them, Break off the golden rings" (Ex. 32:2). The women heard (this), but they were unwilling to give their earrings to their husbands; but they said to them: Ye desire to make a graven image and a molten image without any power in it to deliver. **The Holy One, blessed be He, gave the women their reward in this world and in the world to come.**

...

**Aaron found among the earrings one plate of gold upon which the Holy Name was written, and engraven thereon was the figure of a calf, and that (plate) alone did he cast into the fiery furnace, as it is said, "So they gave it me: and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf"**

**The calf came out lowing, and the Israelites saw it, and they went astray after it.**

Rabbi Jehudah said: **Sammael entered into it, and he was lowing to mislead Israel, as it is said, "The ox knoweth his owner"**

**The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Israel has forgotten the might of My power, which I wrought for them in Egypt and at the Reed Sea, and they have made an idol for themselves. He said to Moses: Go, get thee down from thy greatness. Moses spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all the worlds!**

**Moses took || the tables (of the law), and he descended, and the tables carried their own weight and Moses with them; but when they beheld the calf and the dances, the writing fled from off the tables, and they became heavy in his hands, and Moses was not able to carry himself and the tables, and he cast them from his hand, and they were broken beneath the mount, as it is said, "And Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount"**

choose it for a way. That is because they deny our signs and used to disregard them.

147 Those who deny our signs and the meeting of the hereafter, their works are fruitless. Are they repaid for anything except what they used to do?

148 And *the people of Moses, afterward chose a calf out of their ornaments, which made a lowing sound. Didn't they see that it did not speak to them or guide them to any path? They chose it and became wrongdoers.*

149 And when they feared the consequences of this and saw that they had gone astray, they said, Unless our Lord has mercy on us and forgives us, we are indeed among the lost.

150 And *when Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved, he said, What you did after I left you is evil. Would you hasten the judgment of your Lord? And he threw down the tablets, and he seized his brother by the head, dragging him toward him. He said, Son of my mother, indeed, the people judged me weak and almost killed me. Oh, do not make my enemies triumph over me and do not place me among the evildoers.*

Moses said to Aaron: *What hast thou done to this people? Thou hast made them unruly, like a woman who is unchecked owing to immorality. He said to Moses: I saw what they did to Hur, and I feared very greatly.*

Moses saw that the tribe of Levi was with him. He became strengthened with his might, and *he burnt the calf with fire, and powdered it, like the dust of the earth, and he cast its dust upon the face of the waters, as it is said, "And he took the || calf which they had made"*

## Quran

**Surah 31:14** - And we have commanded man regarding his parents, his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and *his weaning is in two years*. Give thanks to me and to your parents. To me is the journeying.

**Surah 46:15** - And we have enjoined on man doing good to his parents. His mother bears him with reluctance, and brings him forth with reluctance, and *the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months*, until, when he attains full strength and reaches forty years, he says, My Lord, enable me to give thanks for the favor with which you have favored me and my parents, and that I may work righteousness that is acceptable to you. And be favorable to me in the matter of my descendants. Indeed, I have turned to you repentant, and indeed, I am one of the Muslims.

Kafir (كافر)

**Root:** K-F-R (ك ف ر) — literally means *to cover, conceal, or deny*.

In Qur'anic usage, *kafir* means one who "covers up" the truth or denies God's revelation — not necessarily an atheist, but someone who rejects what they know or have heard as divine truth.

## Talmud

**Ketubot 60a:4** - The Sages taught in a baraita: *A child may continue to nurse until the age of twenty-four months*, and from this point forward, if he continues to nurse, he is like one who nurses from a non-kosher animal, as a woman's milk is forbidden to anyone other than a small child; this is the statement of Rabbi Eliezer. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A child may continue to nurse even for four or five years, and this is permitted. However, if he ceased, i.e., was weaned, after *twenty-four months* and then resumed nursing, he is like one who nurses from a non-kosher animal.

Comes from the Hebrew **Kofer** כּוֹפֵר — from the Hebrew root K-P-R (*kafar*), meaning to *deny* or *disbelieve* in later rabbinic Hebrew, though in Biblical Hebrew it primarily means *to atone, to cover over (sin)* (as in *Yom Kippur*).

By the rabbinic period, “**kofer ba-ikkar**” (כּוֹפֵר בְּעִיקָר) = “one who denies the principle (of faith)” — i.e., a heretic or apostate.

Heretic

Several different words for this:

**מינים (minim)** — heretics, sectarians (often referring to early Christians or Gnostics).

**אפיקורסים (apikorosim)** — Epicureans, deniers of divine providence or resurrection.

**כופרים (kofrim)** — deniers of God or Torah (literally “kafirs” in Hebrew).

**עובדי עבודה זרה (ovdei avodah zarah)** — idolaters, those who worship foreign gods.

## Shirk

**Arabic:** شِرْك (shirk) = to share, partner, or associate.

**Theological meaning:** attributing partners, equals, or intermediaries to Allah in divinity, worship, or attributes.

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive that partners be associated with Him.” - Surah 4:48

It’s described as the gravest sin — an unforgivable breach of *tawhīd* (divine unity).

**Hebrew:** שְׁתוּף (shituf) = partnership, combination.

In rabbinic discussions, *shituf* refers to **acknowledging God while also associating another being or power with Him** — precisely what Islam calls *shirk*.

Sanhedrin 38a:13

שְׁתוּף הָיָה לוֹ לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית. דָּבַר אַחַר

**The Sages taught in a baraita (Tosefta 8:7): Adam the first man was created on Shabbat eve at the close of the six days of Creation. And for what reason was this so? So that the heretics will not be able to say that the Holy One, Blessed be He, had a partner (Shutaf), i.e., Adam, in the acts of Creation.**

Sanhedrin 63a:17

אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאִי: וְהֲלֹא כָּל הַמְּשַׁתֵּף שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם וְדָבַר אַחַר נִעְקָר מִן הָעוֹלָם

**Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai said to him: But isn’t anyone who links the name of Heaven and something else, a euphemism for an idol, uprooted from the world? As it is stated: “He who sacrifices to the gods, save to the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed”**

Arabic Term (Transliteration)	Islamic Theological Meaning	Hebrew Cognate (Transliteration)	Hebrew Meaning	Shared Root/Connection
Allāh (الله)	The name of God, emphasizing oneness (tawhid); used in the Shahada and throughout the Quran.	Ĕlōhīm (אֱלֹהִים) or Ĕl (אל)	God or gods (plural of majesty for the one God in monotheistic contexts).	From Proto-Semitic *ʕil- (deity); Arabic al-ilāh contracted to Allāh, paralleling Hebrew's use in biblical theology (e.g., Genesis 1:1).
Raḥmān (رحمن)	The Most Merciful, one of Allah's 99 names (Asma ul-Husna), emphasizing divine compassion (e.g., Quran 1:1).	Raḥmān (רַחֲמָן)	Merciful (used in post-biblical Hebrew and Aramaic for God).	Root <i>rḥm</i> (mercy/compassion); identical in both, with theological overlap in divine attributes.
Raḥīm (رحيم)	The Compassionate, another of Allah's names, often paired with Raḥmān (e.g., Bismillah phrase).	Raḥūm (רַחוּם)	Compassionate (e.g., Exodus 34:6, describing God's mercy).	Same <i>rḥm</i> root; reflects shared Semitic emphasis on God's forgiving nature.
Mālik (مالك)	Owner/King (of the Day of Judgment), an attribute of Allah (e.g., Quran 1:4).	Melekh (מֶלֶךְ)	King (e.g., God as King in Psalms 47:7).	Root <i>mlk</i> (to rule/own); used in Islamic eschatology and Hebrew monarchy/divine kingship.
Nabī (نبي)	Prophet (e.g., Muhammad as the final prophet); over 25 mentioned in the Quran.	Nāvī' (נָבִיא)	Prophet (e.g., Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18).	Root <i>nbʔ</i> (to prophesy/call); direct parallel in prophetic traditions.

Malak (ملك)	Angel (e.g., messengers like Jibril); created beings in Islamic angelology.	Mal' ākh (מַלְאָךְ)	Angel/messenger (e.g., Genesis 28:12).	Root <i>m/ʔk</i> (to send); shared in descriptions of divine intermediaries.
Shayṭān (شيطان)	Satan, the tempter and enemy of humanity (e.g., Quran 2:168).	Śāṭān (שָׂטָן)	Adversary/Satan (e.g., Job 1:6).	Root <i>śṭn</i> (to oppose); identical theological role as a deceiver.
Jannah (جنة)	Paradise/Garden, the eternal reward for believers (e.g., Quran 2:25).	Gan (גן)	Garden (e.g., Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:8).	Root <i>gnn</i> (enclosed garden); both evoke a paradisiacal afterlife or origin.
Jahannam (جهنم)	Hell, place of punishment (e.g., Quran 2:206).	Gē' Hinnōm (גֵּ' הִנּוֹם)	Valley of Hinnom (symbolic hell in Jeremiah 7:31).	From Hebrew place name, adopted into Arabic for eschatological hell.
Zakāh (زكاة)	Obligatory alms-giving, one of the Five Pillars of Islam (e.g., Quran 2:43).	Tzedāqāh (תְּדָאָה)	Charity/righteousness (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:25).	Root <i>ṣdq</i> (purity/righteousness); both tie giving to spiritual purification.
Ṣadaqah (صدقة)	Voluntary charity, beyond zakah (e.g., Hadith emphasis).	Tzedeq (תְּדֵעַ)	Righteousness/justice (e.g., Psalms 89:14).	Same <i>ṣdq</i> root; extends to ethical theology in both faiths.
Islām (إسلام)	Submission to God, the religion's name (e.g., Quran 5:3).	Shālōm (שָׁלוֹם)	Peace/wholeness (e.g., Numbers 6:26).	Root <i>ślm</i> (completeness/peace); Islam connotes peaceful submission, shalom peaceful wholeness.

Muslim (مسلم)	One who submits to God (e.g., Abraham as a muslim in Quran 3:67).	Məshullām (מְשַׁלֵּם)	One who is whole/submits (e.g., biblical name implying completeness).	Same <i>šlm</i> root; theological link to monotheistic submission.
Ḥalāl (حلال)	Permissible (e.g., lawful food in Islamic law).	Ḥillūl (חִלּוּל)	Profanation (opposite sense, but root for freeing/releasing).	Root <i>hll</i> (to free/permit); semantic shift—halal "frees" for use, hillul "frees" from holiness.
Ḥarām (حرام)	Forbidden/sacred (e.g., prohibited acts in sharia).	Ḥērem (חֶרֶם)	Ban/dedicated to destruction (e.g., Joshua 6:17).	Root <i>hrm</i> (to devote/prohibit); both for religiously restricted items.
Kāfir (كافر)	Unbeliever/one who covers truth (e.g., Quran 2:6).	Kōfēr (כּוֹפֵר)	Denier (e.g., one who denies faith).	Root <i>kpr</i> (to cover/deny); also links to kippur (atonement, covering sins).
Shahādah (شهادة)	Testimony of faith (e.g., the Islamic creed).	Shāhēd (שָׁהֵד)	Witness/testimony.	Root <i>šhd</i> (to witness); parallels declarations like the Jewish Shema.
Tawbah (توبة)	Repentance toward God (e.g., Quran 4:17).	Təshūvāh (תְּשׁוּבָה)	Repentance/return (e.g., in High Holidays).	Root <i>šwb/twb</i> (to return); shared in calls for spiritual turning back to God.
Kāhin (כاهן)	Soothsayer (negative in Quran, e.g., 52:41).	Kōhēn (כֹּהֵן)	Priest (e.g., Aaronic priesthood).	Root <i>khn</i> (to officiate); shift from priestly to divinatory in Arabic.
Zabūr (زبور)	Psalms, revealed to David (e.g., Quran 4:163).	Zəṃīr (זִמְרִיר) or Mizmōr (מִזְמוֹר)	Song/psalm (e.g., Psalm titles).	Root <i>zmr</i> (to sing/praise); both for divinely inspired hymns.

Surah	Period	Quranic Passage	Rabbinic / Midrashic Source or Parallel	Notes
Surah 21 – al-Anbiya (The Prophets)	Early–Mid Meccan	vv. 51–68 (Abraham breaking idols)  vv. 78–82 (David and Solomon judging, wind to Solomon)	<i>Genesis Rabbah 38:13, Bereshit Rabbah 44:8</i>  <i>Bava Metzia 83b, Midrash Tehillim 72</i>	Midrash says Abraham smashed his father's idols and was cast into a fiery furnace — identical narrative sequence.  Solomon's miraculous control of nature, animals, and judgment mirrors rabbinic storytelling.
Surah 27 – an-Naml (The Ant)	Mid Meccan	vv. 16–44 (Solomon, the ant, and Queen of Sheba)	<i>Sanhedrin 17a, Targum Shevi on Esther</i>	Solomon understanding animal speech, sending a hoopoe bird, and testing Sheba appear in midrashic tales centuries before Islam.
Surah 28 – al-Qasas (The Stories)	Late Meccan	vv. 3–43 (Moses narrative)	<i>Exodus Rabbah 1–5, Sotah 12b–13a</i>	Parallels Moses' infancy, Pharaoh's wife rescuing him, and his flight — reflecting rabbinic elaborations absent from the Torah.
Surah 37 – as-Saffat (Those Who Set the Ranks)	Late Meccan	vv. 83–107 (Abraham and the sacrifice)	<i>Genesis Rabbah 56:8–11</i>	Abraham's dream trial and Satan tempting him directly follow the Midrash version rather than Genesis.
Surah 7 – al-A'raf (The Heights)	Early–Mid Meccan	vv. 163–166 (The Sabbath-breakers turned into apes)	<i>Sanhedrin 109a, Genesis Rabbah 19:5</i>	Jewish midrash speaks of God transforming sinners into animals — a motif later found in Quran.
Surah 17 – al-Isra (The Night Journey)	Mid Meccan	vv. 101–104 (Moses and Pharaoh)	<i>Exodus Rabbah 9–10, Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 48</i>	Includes ten signs motif — close to midrashic ordering.

Surah 19 – Maryam (Mary)	Early Meccan	vv. 16–36 (Mary & Jesus birth story)	<i>Protoevangelium of James</i> (Christian apocryphal), <i>Midrashic parallel to Hannah</i>	Follows extracanonical lore, not Gospel text.
Surah 18 – al-Kahf (The Cave)	Mid–Late Meccan	vv. 9–26 (People of the Cave)	<i>Christian Syriac apocryphon</i> , but <i>rabbinic style</i> of debate and moral application	Illustrates storytelling format identical to <i>aggadic</i> literature.
Surah 11 – Hud	Mid Meccan	Noah story, vv. 25–49	<i>Midrash Rabbah Noah 30, Sanhedrin 108a</i>	Emphasis on Noah mocked by people, same as midrashic expansions.
Surah 15 – al-Hijr	Mid Meccan	vv. 26–35 (Iblis refusing to bow to Adam)	<i>Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 13, Midrash Rabbah 8:1</i>	Adam’s creation and Satan’s refusal parallel Jewish stories about Samael.
Surah 2 – al-Baqarah (The Cow)	Early Medinan	vv. 67–73 (The Cow narrative)	<i>Numbers Rabbah 19, Deut. Rabbah 2:1</i>	The “heifer” command and purification story mirrors Midrashic elaborations on the <i>Parah Adumah</i> (red heifer) ritual. The Biblical text doesn’t contain the same trial sequence.
		vv. 51–61 (Golden calf, manna & quails)	<i>Exodus Rabbah 42, Sanhedrin 102a</i>	Draws on Talmudic commentary about Israel’s sins in the wilderness.
		vv. 246–251 (Saul, David, Goliath)	<i>Targum Jonathan, Midrash Samuel</i>	Saul chosen by sign of the ark — midrashic motif.
Surah 3 – Ali ‘Imran (Family of Imran)	Early–Mid Medinan	vv. 33–63 (Mary, Zachariah, Jesus)	<i>Protoevangelium of James, Midrash Samuel 17</i>	Reflects apocryphal and midrashic legends rather than NT material.
		vv. 93–94 (“All food was lawful to the children of Israel except...”)	<i>Midrash Rabbah Leviticus 11</i>	Reflects rabbinic debate on dietary laws and Jacob’s vow.

Surah 4 – an-Nisa (The Women)	Mid Medinan	vv. 153–158 (Jews asking for a book to descend from heaven)	<i>Midrash Exodus Rabbah</i> 47	Mirrors rabbinic sayings about Israel demanding to “see” God’s revelation.
Surah 5 – al-Ma’idah (The Table Spread)	Late Medinan	vv. 20–26 (Moses and Israel’s refusal to enter land)	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i> 16	Same storyline of Israelites refusing to fight and being punished to wander.
		vv. 32–33 (“Whoever kills a soul... it is as if he has killed all mankind”)	<i>Sanhedrin</i> 37a	Near-verbatim citation of Talmudic dictum about Cain and Abel.
		vv. 27–31 (Cain & Abel; the raven teaching burial)	<i>Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer</i> 21	The raven motif comes straight from Midrash, not Genesis.
Surah 9 – at-Tawbah (Repentance)	Late Medinan	vv. 110–115 (Table from heaven for the disciples)	<i>Berakhot</i> 59b and Christian apocrypha	Miraculous meal imagery — rabbinic tone combined with Christian elements.
		vv. 30 (“The Jews say Ezra is the son of God...”)	Unknown Jewish sect claim, likely <i>polemical</i> <i>hearsay</i>	No Talmudic source — reflects misrepresentation, but still builds from rabbinic polemics.
Surah 62 – al-Jumu’ah (Friday)	Late Medinan	vv. 31 (“They take their rabbis and monks as lords...”)	<i>Talmud Sanhedrin</i> 63a (reverence to rabbis)	Possibly echoing exaggerated Jewish rabbinic piety.
		vv. 5 (“The likeness of those who were entrusted with the Torah but did not bear it...”)	<i>Avot de-Rabbi Natan</i> 24	Parable of scholars compared to a donkey carrying books.

Surah 63 – al-Munafiqun (Hypocrites)	Late Medinan	vv. 1–8 (Hypocrisy among believers)	<i>Midrash Tehillim 26</i> (hypocritical teachers imagery)	Parallels rabbinic warnings about hypocrites feigning piety.
Surah 98 – al-Bayyina (The Clear Proof)	Late Medinan	vv. 1–6 (People of the Book not divided until after clear proof came)	<i>Midrash Rabbah Deut.</i> <i>8:1</i>	Idea that Jews divided after revelation mirrors rabbinic complaints about sectarian splits.

**Harut and Marut** (cf. *Midrash of Shamir, Surah 2:102*)

Passages that only make sense from a Jewish framework:

The fresh water and salt water seas

Seeing the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah

**Phase 1: Early Meccan (610–614 CE)**

- Stories of Adam, Noah, Mary, and Abraham already showing midrashic influence.
- Limited contact with Jews — material likely came through oral storytelling in Arabia or from Christian Syriac/Jewish converts.

**Phase 2: Mid–Late Meccan (615–620 CE)**

- Heavily midrashic stories of Moses, Solomon, Abraham’s sacrifice.
- These require exposure to *rabbinic compilations* or to oral traditions transmitted from them.

**Phase 3: Medinan (622–632 CE)**

- Tone shifts from narrative to *polemic* (against Jews and Christians).
- Fewer *new* midrashic borrowings, but reinterpretation of earlier ones.

**Tone Shift** – In Mecca, the Quran *retells* Jewish stories; in Medina, it *argues* with Jewish beliefs.

**Jewish Knowledge Level** – The Medinan surahs show far *deeper familiarity* with halakhic and midrashic debates.

This together shows a theological shift in his approach to the Jewish material and the Jews in general. Which lines up with them denying him as a prophet and showing him all the errors in his theology, history, and use of the Talmud. By Medina, Muhammad had direct contact with Jews (Banu Qurayza, Nadir, Qaynuqa'), which could explain how later Talmudic material entered the Quran — undermining divine origin claims.

This change in understanding trajectory is *exactly* what we'd expect from a man progressively *learning* about Jewish lore, **not receiving timeless revelation**.

## How would Mohammad have gotten the Talmudic Material?

### I. Context

The **Talmud** and **Midrash** were transmitted mainly **orally** among Jewish communities in Israel and Babylonia, and circulated widely throughout the Near East in both oral and partial written form. By Muhammad's lifetime (6th–7th century AD), Jewish tribes and Christian sects across Arabia were already familiar with many of these rabbinic stories (*aggadah*), teaching them orally in markets, synagogues, and public discussions.

There also existed complete *written* forms of both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds although these were very expensive, slow to create, and centralized to Babylon and Israel. The likelihood of these complete documents being in the Hijaz less than 100 years after they were compiled is extremely unlikely.

### II. Timeline of Muhammad's Possible Access to These Traditions

#### 1. Pre-610 CE — Before the First Revelation

##### a. Trade and Caravan Exposure (Most Likely Early Influence)

Before proclaiming prophethood, Muhammad worked in the Meccan caravan trade, traveling north into **Byzantine Syria** and south into **Yemen**. These routes were lined with **Jewish and Christian communities**, where rabbinic and apocryphal stories were commonplace. Arabia's oral culture made it easy to hear, memorize, and later retell such stories *without literacy*.

### **b. Waraqah ibn Nawfal (Direct Scriptural Influence)**

Hadith sources (e.g., *Sahih al-Bukhari*) describe **Waraqah ibn Nawfal**, Khadijah's cousin, as a **Christian who "read the Gospel in Arabic"**. Immediately after Muhammad's first experience in the cave with the ~~demən~~ angel, Khadijah brought him to Waraqah, who affirmed the experience as a divine calling.

Waraqah's literacy and theological background make him the **first known scripturally literate figure** to validate Muhammad's experiences and possibly introduce him to Judeo-Christian traditions.

### **c. Meccan Environment and Slaves**

Mecca had contact with **foreign slaves and clients**, including a **Christian blacksmith** mentioned in early sirah and tafsir literature. The Quran itself records accusations that Muhammad learned from a foreigner:

**Surah 16:103** – "We know they say, 'It is only a human being who teaches him.' The tongue of the one they allude to is foreign, but this is clear Arabic speech."

This indicates that even his contemporaries noticed the influence of non-Arab religious ideas on Muhammad's recitations. The rebuttal to this inside of the Quran is that it is "written in Arabic", thus it can't be the work of foreigners.

## **2. 610–622 CE — Meccan Period**

During this phase, the revelations are shorter, poetic, moralistic, but heavily Talmudic. Surahs **21 (al-Anbiya)** and **27 (an-Naml)** are **Meccan**, dated to roughly **610–620 CE**, before the Hijrah. Yet both contain strong Talmudic/Midrashic parallels (among many others):

- **Abraham breaking idols** — *Midrash Rabbah Genesis 38* → Q 21:51–68
- **Solomon and the talking ant/bird** — *Talmud Sanhedrin 17a, Midrash Tanchuma Buber Balaq 13* → Q 27:17–19

That means this material entered the Quran *before* Muhammad's Medina period. In **Mecca**, Muhammad's circle was small and overwhelmingly **pagan Quraysh**. There's no record of large Jewish communities there.

So any Jewish-derived content must have come through:

- **Traveling storytellers or traders** familiar with Near-Eastern folklore (including "Isrā'īliyyāt").
- **Arab monotheists (ḥanīfs)** who had picked up Jewish and Christian tales.

- **Syriac Christian informants** — some of whom used apocryphal stories closely resembling midrashic forms.
- **Physical Possession of Talmudic Material** — unlikely, but a possibility nonetheless. Especially considering his work as a trader, he could have obtained a copy of some parts of the babylonian Talmud.

This supports a *folk-transmission* model, not divine revelation. Mohammad also may have gotten his hands on papyrus/codex fragments of the Talmud (such as Sanhedrin, Genesis Rabbah, Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, Rosh Hashanah, etc) either through trades, conversion of Jews, or through robbery of Jews.

### 3. 622–632 CE — Medinan Period (Major Influx of Rabbinic Content)

After the **Hijrah (migration)** to Medina, Muhammad entered direct contact with **Jewish tribes—Banu Qurayza, Banu Nadir, and Banu Qaynuqa**—who had rabbis, teachers, and storytellers well-versed in Midrashic lore.

Many of the Quranic stories with *clear* and *specific Talmudic or Midrashic parallels* also appear in this period. But this period does not contain more per capita Talmudic stories than the Meccan period. Indicating that his source of Jewish knowledge was available before his interactions with the Jews. This may increase the likelihood of him getting his hands on a physical Talmud but not understanding any of it and thus was using it like you would expect a child to to gain credibility.

**Salman the Persian** also entered Muhammad’s circle in Medina. He had studied under Christian monks and was familiar with **Biblical and apocryphal texts**. His influence likely affected later surahs incorporating Christian-Jewish themes, including the names ‘Tawrat’ and ‘Injil’ which was only used once each before Medina in Surah 7 (which itself may be a later insertion).

### III. Methods of Transmission (Ranked by Likelihood)

Rank	Transmission Route	Description
1. <b>Oral contact with Jewish tribes</b>	Direct exposure to rabbis and storytellers in Medina; most Talmudic parallels appear in Medinan surahs.	622–632 CE
2. <b>Trade routes and markets</b>	Merchants and pilgrims exchanged stories along caravan routes; ideal for oral transmission.	Pre-610 to 632 CE
3. <b>Waraqah ibn Nawfal</b>	Literate Christian confirming Muhammad’s first experiences; early exposure to Abrahamic lore.	c. 610 CE

<b>4. Converts and clients (mawali)</b>	Jews and Christians who converted or interacted with Muslims carried oral traditions into the early Muslim community.	622–632 CE
<b>5. Poets and reciters</b>	Arabia’s oral culture preserved moral and religious tales; such material easily integrated into the Quranic narrative style.	Entire career
<b>6. Written or translated materials</b>	Possible but least likely; books were rare, expensive, and the Talmud wasn’t widely written in Arabic.	Minimal evidence

#### IV. Practical Implications

- The **oral route** explains why Quranic parallels are close in meaning and phrasing but rarely verbatim: they’re *retellings* of familiar religious lore, not copied text.
- The **Quran’s own acknowledgment** of accusations that Muhammad was taught by others (Surah 16:103, Surah 25:4–6) reinforces that even his audience recognized external influence.
- **Illiteracy is irrelevant:** in a memorization-based culture, oral retelling was the norm for transmitting both scripture and folklore.

#### V. Mohammad’s Own Ability to Understand It

Muhammad was almost certainly multilingual. In the 5th–7th centuries CE, traders in Arabia commonly used **Arabic, Aramaic/Syriac, Greek, and Persian**, with **South Arabian dialects** like **Sabaic, Himyaritic, or Ge’ez** also were prevalent along the Yemeni routes. As a merchant who traded in those regions, Muhammad would have interacted with speakers of all these languages, making it highly plausible that he had at least a working knowledge of several.

Given that **Gnostic, Christian, and Jewish writings** circulated in **Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic**, this linguistic diversity would not have prevented exposure to their ideas. It’s reasonable to assume that Muhammad could have **encountered these religious stories and teachings directly or through bilingual intermediaries**, then **rephrased or adapted them into Arabic** for his ~~death-cult~~ audience to follow later as evidence of his prophethood. Thus, linguistic barriers alone do not rule out the transmission of preexisting Judeo-Christian and Gnostic material into the Qur’anic narrative.

#### VI. Summary

Muhammad most plausibly encountered Talmudic and Midrashic material through **oral transmission** — first via Meccan trade and contacts like Waraqah ibn Nawfal, and later, far more directly, through **Jewish tribes and converts in Medina**. These oral traditions, already circulating widely across Arabia, were **recast into Quranic form** and presented as revelation. This model explains the Quran's parallels with rabbinic literature without requiring literacy, manuscripts, or implausible coincidence.

Important points that make oral transmission more likely

- **Talmudic material was full of short, memorable vignettes and moral maxims** — ideal for oral spread.
- **Arabic society was overwhelmingly oral and memorization-based**, which makes hearing → memorizing → incorporating trivial.
- **Mohammad spent years in hubs (Mecca markets, later Medina) where Jews, Christians, Syriac speakers and traders converged** — maximum exposure.
- **The illiteracy argument (Mohammad *ummi*) is irrelevant** — you don't need to read to learn stories or sayings; you only need to hear them.

## Further Problems the Talmudic Dilemma Creates for Muslims

The Talmudic Dilemma is a massive problem of Muslims to solve but it also opens up a wide range of other related problems that make it far too much to bear. Here are some more problems that fall out of this dilemma:

### Allah's Preservation Promise (15:9)

Islam says Allah guards His revelation, but if genuine divine truths had to survive in the *Talmud* until Mohammad, that means Allah preserved them *outside* the line of prophets and scriptures He supposedly protects.

### The "Unlettered Prophet" Claim

Islam defends Mohammad against plagiarism by calling him *ummi* (illiterate), but if the Quran really contains detailed rabbinic material, then literacy isn't the issue — oral borrowing suffices. *This undercuts the apologetic.*

### Chain of Transmission Problem (Isnad)

Islam prides itself on *isnad* (chains of transmission). Yet the Quran's use of Talmudic content

implies Allah *relied on the rabbis' isnad* (chains of rabbinic debate) to pass His words along. *That grants Jewish oral tradition the very reliability Islam denies it.* This gives Judaism isnad chains that are *valid and superior to Allah's*.

### **The Problem of Selectivity**

If the Quran selectively repeats Talmudic content, how do Muslims know which parts are divine? The only answer is: “the parts that match the Quran.” That’s circular.

### **Moral Derivation vs. Revelation**

If the Talmud already had certain moral maxims (e.g., value of life, fasting, prayer laws), then the Quran is derivative rather than revelatory. That reduces Mohammad to a transmitter of existing traditions, not a prophet with unique revelation.

### **Transmission Without Prophets**

**The** Quran insists revelation only comes through prophets (42:51, 4:163–165), but if Talmudic material really was divine truth preserved until Mohammad, then rabbis functioned as vessels of revelation — even though Islam denies them that role.

### **Borrowing from the “Corrupted”**

Islam repeatedly says Jews corrupted their scripture (2:79, 4:46). If the Quran contains Talmudic material, it’s borrowing from people it also condemns as corrupt. That undermines the Quran’s polemics.

### **Gap of Silence**

Islam teaches ~600 years passed without prophets (Jesus → Mohammad). If genuine revelation was preserved in the Talmud in this gap, then “no prophets” doesn’t mean “no guidance” — which contradicts Islam’s theology of continuous prophetic mediation.

### **Uniqueness Challenge**

The Quran claims it’s inimitable (17:88), but if chunks of its moral/legal content appear earlier in rabbinic writings, the uniqueness challenge collapses.

### **Authority of Jewish Oral Law**

By echoing Talmudic teachings (e.g., Surah 5:32 ≈ Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5), the Quran indirectly acknowledges the authority of Jewish oral tradition as the word of God. Yet Mohammad condemned Jews for following rabbis instead of God’s word. This is incoherent. Also, much of the content of the Quran **contradicts** with the Talmud.

The Talmudic dilemma doesn't just raise one question ("did Mohammad copy?"). It blows holes in multiple Islamic claims:

- **Revelation only through prophets** → contradicted.
- **Jews corrupted revelation** → contradicted.
- **Quran is unique** → contradicted.
- **Allah preserves revelation** → contradicted.
- **Mohammad's illiteracy proves divine origin** → contradicted.
- **Rabbis had no divine authority** → contradicted.

This argument tears down the very foundations of *EVERY* aspect of the Quran and Islam.

**If Allah alone reveals through prophets**, then either Allah let *non-prophets* (the rabbis) carry revelation for 600 years, or Mohammad simply heard and reused their material. Both scenarios contradict Islam's theology.

**If the Jews were corrupt**, why does the Quran echo their "corrupt" oral law? That implies Mohammad learned from Jews, not from God.

**If the Quran is unique and inimitable**, how can it contain maxims and stories already written in rabbinic works centuries earlier? That makes it derivative, not unique.

**If the Quran was divinely preserved**, why does Allah need to "borrow" from human rabbis instead of preserving the truth Himself? That undermines the claim of divine preservation (15:9).

### **Why is the Talmud useful for a cult leader to brainwash his followers?**

Rabbinic literature specializes in short, memorable legal maxims, parables, and aggadic tales — exactly the kinds of items that travel orally and would have been easy to memorize and translate.

Jewish tribes in Hijaz and northern Arabia preserved and told these stories; merchants and converts carried them; Christian Syriac traditions also circulated overlapping motifs. Making them familiar enough that he can pass off divine revelation and sound authentic for credibility without having to have much understanding of the text itself or the implications of his theology.

If Mohammad's original audience was unfamiliar with this material, then it would have made it easier to persuade them and trick them. This also explains the hostility he gets after the Cow

since the Jews called him out on his lies and he got caught then gaslit his followers even more. The exact thing you would expect from a cult leader.

## Muslim Rebuttals

1. “Both come from the same ancient revelation.”

Claim: The Talmud and Quran share truths because both descend from revelation given to earlier prophets.

Rebuttal:

- The Talmud is not presented as prophetic speech — it is layered rabbinic debate compiled centuries after prophecy ceased, not direct prophetic transmission. This could only work if you assume the oral traditions go back to Sinai and survived verbatim into the Talmud without corruption. For the overlap to come from a common revelation, you must assume those rabbinic discussions preserved divine wording verbatim for 1,000+ years — something Islam denies when accusing Jews of corrupting revelation.
- You **cannot** claim corruption *and* perfect preservation simultaneously.

2. “The Jews retained fragments of truth.”

Claim: Despite their errors, Jews *accidentally* kept a few genuine teachings that God later confirmed through Muhammad.

Rebuttal:

- This creates the selection problem — how do you know which parts were true? The only answer given is “the parts that match the Quran,” which is circular reasoning.
- If the Jews were astray, the Quran’s wholesale repetition of their phrasing (e.g., *Surah 5:32* ≈ *Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5*) means the “corrupted” material is being treated as revelation.
- Possible in principle (truth can survive in corrupted traditions), but it creates the contradiction: if Jews were astray, how do you distinguish which parts of their writings were still divine and which were corruption, especially when the Quran lifts passages wholesale (like *Surah 5:32* ≈ *Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5*)? If your answer is “what agrees with the Quran” that is circular reasoning and a logical fallacy.

3. “The Quran corrects Jewish errors.”

Claim: Allah reused Jewish stories but purified or corrected them.

Rebuttal:

- Then you must show the correction. In most parallels, the Quran repeats midrashic details almost verbatim.
- The text doesn't say, "they claim this but..." It states the material as revelation from God.

4. "The Quran quotes Jewish ideas to debate with them."

Claim: Muhammad used Jewish sources rhetorically — citing their own lore back at them.

Rebuttal:

- The Quran never frames these as quotations; it speaks in God's voice declaring the content as divine law.
- Polemical citation requires attribution ("you say"), which the Quran lacks. It asserts, not argues.

5. "These are universal truths or coincidences."

Claim: Shared moral truths appear in all religions; overlap doesn't imply copying.

Rebuttal:

- Generic morality can be universal, but unique rabbinic phrasings (legal formulae, story motifs) are not.
- If the Quran's wording mirrors rabbinic idioms, coincidence is statistically implausible.
- Moreover, the Quran's claim to *inimitable style* collapses if it mirrors pre-existing phrasing.

6. "Muhammad learned it orally, and God confirmed it."

Claim: He heard Jewish lore through oral tradition, and Allah validated the truthful parts.

Rebuttal:

- Historically plausible, theologically fatal. It concedes human mediation — the very thing the Quran denies.
- Revelation becomes retrospective approval of whatever Muhammad happened to hear.

7. “The Quran doesn’t copy — the Talmud copied from earlier prophets.”

Claim: Jewish rabbis stole, distorted, or invented stories based on prophetic material that predated the Talmud. So when the Quran echoes those passages, it isn’t borrowing; it’s reclaiming what was originally divine.

Rebuttal:

- This reverses chronology. The Talmudic passages pre-date Islam by centuries; there’s no evidence of pre-Talmudic prophetic originals containing those same expansions.
- The Quran is 600+ years after Jesus, and the Talmud is traceable to rabbinic debates in late antiquity. The “they copied us” move is a historical reversal without evidence.
- The burden is on the Muslim claimant to produce that lost source. None exists.

8. “Allah can reveal the same message multiple times, even without prophets.”

Claim: God can re-reveal truths to anyone He chooses.

Rebuttal:

- Quran 42:51 and 4:165 explicitly state Allah only reveals *through prophets*.
- Between Jesus and Muhammad, Islam says there were *no prophets*.
- Thus, if the Talmud contains “wahy,” Islamic theology collapses.

9. “Muhammad was illiterate, so he couldn’t copy.”

Claim: Being “ummi,” he couldn’t have read Jewish texts.

Rebuttal:

- Illiteracy doesn’t prevent oral borrowing; the Talmud was transmitted orally for centuries.
- “Ummi” likely means “unlettered in Scripture,” not unable to hear, memorize, and retell stories.
- He didn’t need a printing press — oral culture and roadside rabbis did the job.

10. “Similar stories prove common origin, not dependence.”

Claim: If two texts share themes, it doesn’t mean one copied the other — both draw on a broader oral Near Eastern folklore pool.

- Works for vague parallels, but fails with *very specific verbal overlaps* (e.g., Surah 5:32 ≈ Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5).
- Also the ‘folklore pool’ is still made up of manmade folklore which is *FALSE*. Why is Allah containing false folklore into his eternal speech?

11. “Mohammad was taught by God directly.”

Claim: Allah taught Mohammad directly, thus removing the need of copying. It is a new revelation from Allah that just so happens to line up with older Jewish usage.

- Then why does God echo rabbinic wording and midrashic detail rather than produce wholly new phrasing?

### Underlying Logical Flaws

Argument Type	Logical Problem	Summary of Circularity
“Both share revelation.”	Assumes what it must prove	The Quran is true because it restores revelation; we know it’s revelation because it matches the Quran.
“Jews preserved fragments.”	Selection fallacy	The “true” fragments are defined by what agrees with Islam.
“It’s correction / polemic.”	Category error	The Quran never identifies these as citations; it presents them as Allah’s speech.
“Universal truths.”	Category conflation	Applies moral universality to specific phrasing.
“Oral confirmation.”	Ad hoc theology	Whatever Muhammad knew is declared revelation retroactively.

---

### The Core Problem

Every defense returns to a single unprovable assumption:

“It’s revelation because it’s in the Quran.”

That’s a closed epistemic loop. Once you remove that assumption, the evidence fits the simpler explanation:

Muhammad encountered Jewish oral traditions, absorbed them into his message, and repackaged them as divine revelation.

That fits the timeline, historical contact, and the literary data. *No miracles, no contradictions, no circular reasoning.* The Quran is a manmade document mostly based on Jewish source material alongside Greek, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Gnostic writings.

The Talmudic dilemma forces Islam into a corner: accept an incoherent theology of revelation, or admit that Mohammad's revelations drew substantially on human Jewish and Christian material. Historically and logically, the latter is overwhelmingly likely — which means the Quran contains human-sourced content and is not purely a unique divine text. Thus nullifying the truthfulness of the Quran and making Islam false.

## What scholars have done on this topic

### 1. Abraham Geiger

- A 19th-century German rabbi. He argued that the Quran borrowed heavily from Jewish sources, including Midrashic and rabbinic traditions. For example, Geiger saw parallels between Quranic stories of biblical figures and Midrashic details. [EU Publishing](#)

### 2. W. St. Clair Tisdall

- In *The Original Sources of the Quran*, he collected arguments that parts of the Quran derive from Judaism, Christianity, and non-canonical/late traditions. He includes claims that some Quranic narratives (Cain and Abel, Joseph, etc.) match Midrash and Targum sources. [mquran.org](#)

### 3. Ibn Warraq

- He's a modern author who has collected essays from scholars who argue that the Quran has many external sources — including Jewish and Christian narratives. *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* includes essays that explore how Jewish/Midrashic / Late Antique literature may have contributed material. [Wikipedia](#)

### 4. Isaac Yahuda

- A Jewish scholar who produced a Hebrew commentary on the Quran. He also worked on tracing how Islamic tradition intersects with Jewish and Christian sources; that includes noting adoption or adaptation of Biblical/polycanonical tradition. [MDPI](#)

**5. Modern academic work (comparative, historical, literary-critical)**

- Scholars like Gabriel Said Reynolds, Uri Rubin, and others in Quranic Studies sometimes talk about “echoes” or “themes” in the Quran that reflect midrashic/apocryphal / Jewish/Christian sources. They debate influence, interaction, and borrowing but don’t go as far as to say that it is ‘man-made’. [Reynolds](#)