

between those passages and the *sūrah*'s biblical narratives. Structural analysis through an examination of legislation may also prove fruitful for other *sūrahs* that combine legislation with biblical narrative materials, such as *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* or a late Meccan *sūrah* like *Sūrat al-An'ām*. Whether a *sūrah* with significant legislative content but a paucity of narrative elements, such as *Sūrat al-Nisā'* or *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, could be analyzed in that way remains to be tested.

In the case of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, if one construes it, from a certain altitude, primarily as a retelling of biblical narratives and then the presentation of a set of "biblical" laws to govern the neo-biblical or neo-covenantal qur'ānic community, it resolves into an interpretation of the first two books of the Pentateuch, Genesis and Exodus. At this level of generalization, the fact that the order of the narrative materials from Exodus and Genesis does not always correspond precisely to their biblical order is unimportant; biblical referentiality is more significant than sequence (even though, from a lower altitude, attention to the sequence of these materials might be fruitful).<sup>60</sup> The important sequence is the occurrence first of biblical narratives, which anyway begin in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* near enough to creation with Adam and continue with Moses, and, second, of "biblical" legislation.

The main point of a condensed re-presentation of Genesis and Exodus would be to draw parallels between the history of the Jews as parties to the Covenant and the qur'ānic audience as the new covenantal community. These parallels unfold on various levels (figuration, re-enactment, succession, new covenant, etc.). Though this interpretation of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* is not new, it does help to shed light on the function and distinctiveness of the *sūrah*'s various legal passages, which has been the goal of this article.<sup>61</sup> The most prominent legislative feature of the *sūrah*, its two main lists of obligations, which appear in verses 178–203 and 215–242, present the Neo-Covenantal Code sent down to govern the ritual and civil life of the qur'ānic community. For the qur'ānic community, that code—the new Covenant—is not a spiritual fulfillment of biblical legislation, but rather an updating and reimposition of biblicizing legislation in an Arabian context.

60. That referentiality is more important than accuracy is shown by the varying versions of the Decalogue, sometimes abbreviated and sometimes augmented, that appear in the Qur'ān. This point seems at least implicit in Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'ān*, 215–218, and it is one that I made in my article "When Less is More."

61. It is certainly suggested by Neal Robinson in the interpretation of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* cited above.

## RING COMPOSITION IN SŪRAT YŪSUF (Q 12)

JAWAD ANWAR QURESHI

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the structure of *Sūrat Yūsuf* (Q 12), arguing that the *sūrah* demonstrates the most prominent features of ring composition more intricately than scholarship has thus far acknowledged. This paper first considers guidelines for arguing for ring composition, following critical scholarship on ring composition and Mary Douglas' *Thinking in Circles*. It then demonstrates that Q 12 displays an intricate structure of mirroring, concentric composition, and parallelism, and draws attention to the literary markers and correspondences between mirrored elements throughout the narrative. The final section goes beyond the form of the *sūrah* to address its broader argument by placing it in the context of the third Meccan phase of the Prophet Muḥammad's mission. The themes of betrayal, treachery, exile, reconciliation, forbearance, and reunion are central to this narrative and reflect the anxiety and despair of Muḥammad in this period. This paper demonstrates the utility of analyzing passages of the Qur'ān for ring composition, while adhering to stricter criteria for this type of analysis.

## Keywords

Joseph, ring composition, Mary Douglas

Recent decades have witnessed a growing body of Western scholarship on the thematic coherence and structural unity of qur'ānic *sūrahs*.<sup>1</sup> Michel Cuypers, for example, has demonstrated the value of applying methods of rhetorical criticism derived from Biblical Studies to examine *sūrahs* for symmetry, parallelism, and ring and mirror compositions.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Raymond

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Annual Meeting of the International Qur'anic Studies Association held in San Antonio, Texas, USA, in November 2016, and was subsequently awarded the 2017 Andrew Rippin Best Paper Prize, open to papers delivered at IQSA Annual Meetings by junior scholars. The prize is given in honor of Prof. Andrew Rippin (1950–2016), a leading scholar of the Qur'ān and inaugural president of the International Qur'anic Studies Association (2014). The present paper is a revised and expanded version of that paper.

2. See Michel Cuypers, *The Banquet: A Reading of the Fifth Sura of the Qur'ān* (Miami,

D4468



MADDE YAYINLANDIKTAN SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN