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***Hagar's Wanderings: Between Judaism and Islam***

*1. Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

The story of Abraham's bondswoman Hagar and how she was expelled several times, both without child (Gen. 16:1-15) and together with child (21:8-21), has not failed to baffle the reader of the Bible. Sarah's cruel behavior towards Hagar, and Abraham's tacit compliance with it, posed serious moral and even theological questions. Is this the way salvation history enfolds itself? At the same time, the apparent subjugation of Hagar rouses in the sensitive reader feelings of compassion. Her brave struggle in the desert together with her child may even prompt admiration. No wonder that especially in feminist perspective, Hagar's story became the exemplary account of "an enslaved woman who symbolizes the struggle for survival of colonized people."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, already in the early history of interpretation, different 'solutions' were offered as to the motives of the protagonists. Was it Sarah's jealousy that prompted the patriarch to expel mother and child or were there quarrels between the two sons of the same father, Ishmael and Isaac? In the last case, Sarah would have acted out of concern for Isaac, as some Rabbinic explanations intimate. Quarrelling between brothers as an incentive for divine action is a well-known phenomenon in the Bible. No less well known is the theme of God's acting in history in spite of man's selfish behaviour or rather by using that all-too-human behavior to His own ends. Jacob's mischievous dealings with his brother's right of the first-born and fatherly blessing earned him the honor of becoming the embodiment of the people of Israel; and if not for the jealousy of Joseph's brothers, Joseph would never have become the vice-regent of Egypt. Hagar's expulsion can be viewed in a similar way. I want to demonstrate how this explanation is hidden in the Biblical story and received hardly any attention in Jewish interpretations of the Bible. In Islamic tradition, however, the

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Simon O'Meara, member of the research group Arabic studies located at the University of Utrecht under the aegis of prof. Christian Lange, for his stimulating criticism of earlier versions of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Jessica Grimes, 'Reinterpreting Hagar's story', *Lectio Difficilior* 1 (2004), 1-12.

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divine purpose behind all this forms the cornerstone of the story of Hagar. First of all, Islamic writers make Abraham's /Ibrāhīm's<sup>3</sup> conduct more plausible: Hagar's expulsion was the first step towards the founding of Mecca as a sacred place and Abraham was aware of that by prophetic foresight.

The similarity between the Jewish stories and the Islamic stories about Hagar is striking, but nonetheless, the eventual outcome is widely different, as I will make clear.

## *2. The interaction between Jewish and Islamic sources*

As is known, the Qur'an itself does not mention Hagar by name, offering merely allusions to the whereabouts of Abraham's relatives after he had left them: "Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer" (Q.14:37). Hence Islamic tradition allows for creative commentaries to fill in the blanks spaces in the Qur'an in order to describe Hagar's role in the discovery /establishment of Mecca and the establishment of the *hajj*. In fact, the Qur'an does refer to the *hajj* rites (2:158), but without any reference to Hagar's role.<sup>4</sup> The role of Jewish oral or written traditions has been considerable in the formation of those commentaries, whether by Jewish spokesmen or by Jewish converts to Islam. Although the influence of Jewish sources upon Islamic Qur'anic and post-Qur'anic traditions has been documented in several studies, the transformation process required to adapt the Jewish sources to specific Islamic purposes, sometimes via the intermediary of an Eastern Christian milieu, has not always been given its due. The aim of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish scholar Abraham

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<sup>3</sup> For clarity's sake, I will use the Biblical names of the protagonists of the story both in the Jewish and in the Islamic contexts.

<sup>4</sup> F. Leemhuis, 'Hājar in the Qur'ān and its Early Commentaries', in: M. Goodman a.o. (eds), *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites. Jewish, Christian and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, Leiden 2010, 503. The first Islamic source to tell the story of Hagar and Ishmael searching for water, according to Leemhuis, is al-Bukhārī (810-870 CE). We will see, however, that already before al-Bukhārī there is the account of 'Abd al-Razzāq about Hagar's wanderings.

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Geiger was mainly to demonstrate the secondary nature of the Qur'an in comparison to the rich Jewish oral tradition. He often considered the differences as 'mistakes' from the side of the Qur'an. Studies devoted to the parallels between Rabbinic traditions and Qur'anic and post-Qur'anic literature such as by Sidersky, Weil, Moubarac and Katsch often confine themselves to listing the parallels, implicitly assuming a one-way traffic from Judaism to Islam and ignoring the possible role of Eastern Christianity. Louis Ginzberg's impressive collection, *Legends of the Jews*, likewise aimed to retrieve so-called 'lost midrashim' in extra-Jewish traditions such as Patristic and Islamic writers. Although he does not exclude Christian and Islamic influence upon Jewish sources in specific instances, his main focus remains the Jewish world. Hence he does not devote much attention to the specific context of these motifs in the Christian and Islamic traditions. Even when the motifs have been taken over from Judaism, the process required to transform these stories to fit the specific religious and historical context of Christianity and of Islam, remains in the dark.

The approach that considers Islamic retellings of Biblical stories to be mere imitations of Jewish originals is to my view both historically and methodologically wrong. Historically one should consider the possibility of an influence from Islamic writings upon (later) Jewish midrash as well. In the case of the stories about Hagar, this matter probably remains undecided.<sup>5</sup> Research of some decades ago argues for an influence of the version in the midrash *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* upon Islamic authors, offering some ten different Islamic versions ranging from the ninth to the

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<sup>5</sup> M. Grünbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde*, Leiden 1893, 104 ff. argues for a strong influence of Islamic sources upon the Jewish midrash *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* as the latter shows traces of polemics against Islam, especially in the chapter devoted to Abraham and Ishmael. The same viewpoint in Bernard Heller, 'Muhammedanisches und Anti-muhammedanisches in den Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer', *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 69 (1925), 47-54.

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fourteenth century C.E.<sup>6</sup> Although the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, a re-telling of Biblical history with elaborate embellishments, is post-Quranic in its final redaction, which is generally dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. at the earliest, we will argue further on that elements in have clearly influenced earlier post-Quranic literature.<sup>7</sup>

From a methodological point of view, the question of historical dependence does not solve the question of the meaning of the story in its eventual context. It is this issue which I want to correct in the present contribution. Assessing the transformations of motifs from an intertextual perspective will be the goal of my research into the wanderings of Hagar. Having clarified that, the issue of historical priority can be decided as well. Our contribution will document in detail this process of mutual influence between Jewish and Islamic sources regarding Hagar, in order to arrive at a reconstruction both of the historical process and of the thematic relationship.

### *The intertextuality of the stories about Hagar and Ishmael*

The intertextuality of the sources to be investigated is quite complicated. The Jewish sources belong to the genre of *midrash*, refer to the Hebrew Bible reflecting the perspective of Judaism in the time of the midrash proper. The Islamic sources highlight the succinct and sometimes enigmatic statements of the Qur'an in the form of a commentary (the genre of *tafsīr*), or, in a more narrative vein, offer elaborate stories of Qur'anic protagonists in the genre of "the lives of the prophets" (the genre of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), or place these stories in the perspective of a world history (the genre of *ta'riḫ*). In all these genres, Qur'anic texts are integrated into the narrative,

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<sup>6</sup> Aviva Schussman, "'Sippur Bikurei Abraham etsel Ishmael", (Abraham's visits to Ishmael – The Jewish Origin and Orientation)', *Tarbiz* 49 (1980) 3-4, p. 325-345. She does not treat all of the Jewish sources though.

<sup>7</sup> See the critical edition of *PRE* by M. Higger, 'Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer', *Horeb* 8 (1944), 82-119; 9 (1946/47), 94-166; 10 (1948), 185-294, an edition on the basis of three manuscripts from the Bibliotheca Catanense in Rome. See also D. Börner-Klein, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, edited and translated after the printed edition Venedig 1544 and including the edition Warschau 1852, Berlin 2004.

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although less so in the Tales of the Prophets than in the *tafsīr*: Although the similarity in narrative motifs between the Jewish and Islamic texts on Hagar is obvious, the genre and function of these texts that form the context of the narrative motifs are quite different. As these genres are post-Biblical and post-Qur'anic, I will refer to Bible and Qur'an only in so far as they contribute to the understanding of these genres.

I will start then with Jewish re-interpretations of the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the midrash. The first midrash, the *Genesis Rabba* (GR), is generally dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, hence influence from Islamic traditions can be excluded. This allows us to draw a reliable portrait of Ishmael and Hagar in Jewish context. Then I will compare these interpretations with the midrash mentioned earlier, the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (PRE). This will allow us to verify whether the picture of Ishmael and Hagar within Jewish tradition has undergone further developments from the 5<sup>th</sup> until the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. By comparing PRE with GR, I will demonstrate that the overall portrayal of Hagar and Ishmael in PRE can be explained without recourse to polemics with Islam. Then I will trace the earliest witness of the stories about Hagar and Ishmael in Islamic tradition in order to assess the Jewish influence upon it in more detail. In conclusion I will draw a tentative picture of the intertextuality of these two religious traditions and I will give a chronological account of the interaction between Islam and Judaism concerning the Hagar-cycle.

3. A Jewish re-interpretation of the story of the episode of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael as documented in the midrash.

#### *The evidence of Genesis Rabba*

For our purpose the midrash *Genesis Rabba* (GR) is important because of its date to the early fifth century. This allows us to draw a picture of Hagar as interpreted within Jewish tradition without any Islamic influence.

The first expulsion of Hagar in Genesis 16 was mainly Sarah's wish, not Abraham's, as the Bible states that "Hagar fled from *her* [i.e. Sarah's] face" (Gen.

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16:6) (GR 45:6). Ishmael is reckoned among those who received a name before they were born (GR 45:8), but in spite of that is considered a non-Jew.

Although the Biblical promises to Ishmael and Isaac sound quite similar, both with the future perspective of twelve leaders (compare Gen. 17:20 with Gen. 49:28), according to the Rabbis, the difference is that the leaders descending from Ishmael will fade away soon (GR 47:6). The Rabbis call Ishmael the 'hated one of Abraham's house' (GR 56:4). The negative attitude to Ishmael in Rabbinic literature may be related to a contemporary negative attitude towards the non-Jewish world. The portrayal of Ishmael apparently reflects Jewish perspectives of Arab people.<sup>8</sup> This holds good only when we realize that the view of Ishmael as non-Jewish is essentially a Rabbinic perspective, as the Bible offers no information on the matter. In addition, the Rabbis identify Abraham's wife Keturah with Hagar (Gen. 25:2), whereas the names of Keturah's children are etymologically connected with violence and idolatry (GR 61:5). Jacob's blessing of Isaac that "peoples will serve you" (Gen. 27:29) is likewise interpreted as referring to the non-Jewish world, including Ishmael and the other children of Keturah (GR 66:4).

The Biblical account of Ishmael paying homage to his deceased father seems to have surprised even the Rabbis, as they conclude that this must be the reason that the Bible honors him by mentioning the age of "that wicked man" (i.e. Ishmael) (Gen. 25:17; GR 62:5).

The Rabbinic interpretation of the episode of Ishmael and Isaac becomes clear from this overall negative perspective. Sarah saw Ishmael laughing (Gen. 21:9 < *tsahaq*), but the Rabbis interpret this as Sarah saw Ishmael "making sport", i.e. as sexual immorality ravishing maidens and seducing married women.<sup>9</sup> An alternative interpretation connects the same verb to idolatry and intimates that Sarah saw

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<sup>8</sup> In GR 45:9, Ishmael is associated with Nebuchadnezzar and to later enemies of Israel who wished to destroy the Temple, not the Romans proper but possibly Arab rulers in Vespasian's army.

<sup>9</sup> The verb *tsahaq* ('playing') is thus interpreted by combining this passage with the accusation by Potiphar's wife against Joseph (Gen. 39:17).

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Ishmael sacrificing locusts in a kind of children's imitation of idolatrous sacrifices.<sup>10</sup> A third interpretation connects the "playing" with bloodshed. Thus this midrash (GR 53:11) manages to connect three cardinal sins with Ishmael's behaviour. The Bible merely reports Ishmael's laughing, with the same verb as Sarah's laughing (Gen 21:6), from which Isaac (*Jitsḥaq*) receives his name. The direct link between Ishmael and Isaac and the laughing have been lost in these interpretations. However, even in a different interpretation of *tsaḥaq* as "making sport", Ishmael the bow shooter (Gen. 21:20) is accused of shooting arrows at Isaac, pretending to play but in reality wishing to kill him (GR 53:11). In an ingenious reversal of meaning, the Biblical phrase that "it was very grievous in Abraham's eyes" (Gen 21:11) is no longer connected to Sarah's demand that Hagar and Ishmael be expelled, but to Ishmael's behaviour, which "was grievous in Abraham's eyes"! (GR 53:12).<sup>11</sup>

#### The evidence of *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*

Whereas GR consists of interpretations of a given Biblical text, the collection, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (PRE), shows more characteristics of a retold Bible. Actually, PRE is a mixture of both, although the Biblical quotations hardly interrupt the flow of the story. The option of two or more interpretations of a given Biblical text, as adduced in the *Midrash Rabba*, is not found in this collection. In chapter 30, the PRE offers a retelling of the story of Ishmael.

In it Ishmael is described as an archer (Gen. 21:20), shooting at birds. "He saw Isaac sitting by himself and he (Ishmael) shot an arrow at him to kill him." This,

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<sup>10</sup> In connection with the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:6). See *Sifre Deut* 31 and cp. J. Schwartz, 'Ishmael at play. On Exegesis and Jewish Society', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 66 (1996), 203-221, here p. 214. The same accusation of sacrificing locusts is told about Solomon in the pseudepigraphic *Testament of Solomon*, suggesting that although Solomon was not actually idolatrous, he was tinged by it. Cp. Mishna Sabbath 9:7. See M. Poorthuis, 'King Solomon and the Psalms 72 and 24 in the Debate Between Jews and Christians', in: A. Gerhards & C. Leonhard (eds), *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship*, Leiden 2007, pp. 255-277.

<sup>11</sup> See the even clearer evidence in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen. 21:11.

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according to this midrash, prompted Sarah to ask Abraham to expel both the bondwoman and the son. No doubt the PRE 30 wishes to portray Sarah in a more positive light: it was not her own jealousy, but her concern for the life of Isaac that motivated her behaviour. Even the matter of the inheritance (Gen. 21: 10) is no longer the sole motivation but recedes into the background. God's reassurance to Abraham: "Let it not be grievous in thy sight", is explained by rabbi Jehuda as referring to a dream wherein God reveals to Abraham Sarah's superiority as Abraham's wife over his bondwoman Hagar. Hence, neither Sarah nor Abraham is to blame; it is God's will that things happen as they happen. Again, Abraham's and Sarah's behavior are vouchsafed, but here the problem shifts from a moral to a theological one: why would God allow such discrimination? The midrash recalls the promises to Isaac, as does the Bible (Gen. 21:12). However, whereas the Bible continues with God's reassurance of Abraham: "And the son of the bondwoman [i.e. Ishmael] I will make unto a great people" (Gen 21:13), this midrash ignores this verse altogether!<sup>12</sup> Related to PRE is the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, an Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible with many embellishments, which in its final redaction can likewise be dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>13</sup> This Targum paraphrases the same Biblical text quoted above in a highly negative vein, hereby completely changing its meaning. The Targum emphasizes that God will make Ishmael into a people of robbers. This notion as such should not be viewed as a disparaging reaction to Islam, as Jerome states the same about Arabs being robbers already in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>14</sup> Targum Pseudo-Jonathan prefers a much more negative perspective of Ishmael than the Bible itself, and even attributes this perspective to God.

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<sup>12</sup> Hence this Targum cannot be the source of PRE, but in this case the other way around would still be possible. Independent developments of shared similar sources seems much more probable. See: Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 118

<sup>13</sup> See: M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis. The Aramaic Bible 1B*. Translation, introduction and notes, Edinburgh 1992.

<sup>14</sup> See Hayward, *op. cit.*, 118-119.

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PRE does not hesitate to paint Hagar pitch dark by suggesting that her wandering in the desert (Gen. 21:14) alludes to idolatry (cp. Jer.10:15), while assuming that Hagar is Pharaoh's daughter.<sup>15</sup> This serves as an additional exculpation for Sara's behaviour, because Hagar is descended from the enemies of Abraham. For example Hagar's grandfather Nimrod tried to kill Abraham when he was a boy. Abraham is further exculpated by an ingenious device: there was never a lack of water in Hagar's bottle because of Abraham's merit. Only when she started "to roam about" [i.e. to commit idolatry], did the bottle become empty. The point is clear: Abraham took care of mother and child in the desert but due to Hagar's own sinful behaviour she nearly starved from thirst.<sup>16</sup>

PRE does not skip over the life-saving well but describes how Ishmael prays for water and how God hears his prayer, *because of the merit of Abraham*. Hagar finds the well (cp. Gen 21:17-19), destined by God already from the twilight of creation. This well will serve more than once as a miraculous divine intervention in

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<sup>15</sup> Cp. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Gen 16:1. F. Garcia Martinez, 'Hagar in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan', in: M. Goodman a.o. (eds), *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites. Jewish, Christian and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, Leiden 2010, 265. Hagar is here not only the daughter of Pharaoh, but also the granddaughter of Nimrod! Hagar as idolater is a new development compared to GR, which considered only Ishmael as such. Still, the attempt to detect a more nuanced portrait of Hagar in the midrash than in the Letter to the Galatians and early Christian literature, as does I. Pabst, 'The interpretation of the Sarah-Hagar-stories in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature', *Lectio Difficilior* 1 (2003) 1, should be considered apologetic. On the contrary, the similarity between the Christian and the Jewish interpretations of Hagar, both connecting her to the religious 'out-group', Jews and pagans respectively, is striking.

<sup>16</sup> Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Gen 21:16 offers a totally different explanation: Ishmael was punished for his idolatry with fever and because of that he drank all the water. This is again proof that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan cannot be the direct source of PRE. The other way around is also improbable. See: C.T.R. Hayward, 'Pseudo-Jonathan and anti-Islamic Polemic', *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism*, Leiden 2010, pp. 110-113, contra M. Ohana, 'La polémique judéo-islamique et l'image d'Ismael dans Targum Pseudo-Jonathan et dans Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer', *Augustinianum* 15 (1975), pp. 367-87, who defends the dependency of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on PRE.

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history. Hence the motif of the well can be interpreted as another indication of God's caring providence.

In a parallel version, Ishmael's prayer is mentioned: "God of my father Abraham, you have other endings of life, don't let me die of thirst". Then the miraculous fountain is disclosed to Ishmael himself.<sup>17</sup>

Surprisingly, after drinking, Hagar and Ishmael leave the well to go to another wilderness, that of Paran, where, according to the Bible "he dwelt" (Gen. 21:21). Apparently, the PRE interprets "the desert" in verse 20 as different from the "desert of Paran" in verse 21.

Although in constant reference to the Bible, the midrash offers a picture of Hagar and Ishmael wholly different from that in the Bible. There is no doubt that the PRE continues the critical attitude of GR towards Ishmael and Hagar and heightens it. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is even more critical to Hagar and Ishmael than PRE. In both texts not only Ishmael, but both mother and son are considered as prone to idolatry, supposedly belonging to the non-Jewish world.<sup>18</sup> Hagar and Ishmael are carriers of divine promises that nevertheless come to nought. Sarah's attitude to Hagar is explained in the light of her wish to protect Isaac from Ishmael's violent attacks, or out of abhorrence of Ishmael's idolatrous behavior. Abraham is not to blame either: he complies with Sarah upon the behest of God himself. Sarah was one of the seven prophetesses (Ex Rabba 1:1). In addition, Ishmael is described as violent and full of debauchery. He is murderous towards Isaac, his mother Hagar appears to be affiliated to Pharaoh and still clings to her idolatrous habits, while instilling these into her son as well. Abraham's grief over the expulsion is interpreted away by God's reassurance, without, however, mentioning the Biblical promise to Ishmael, which is the core of that divine reassurance. Abraham's behavior is vouchsafed as is Sarah's, at the expense of Hagar's supposedly immoral nature.

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<sup>17</sup> Yalkut Shimoni 95 on Genesis 21:15.

<sup>18</sup> In PRE 26, Hagar is likewise supposed to be the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh!

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Although PRE adds new details to the already negative picture of Hagar and Ishmael in GR, we believe that there is no need to assume specific external factors to account for the increasingly negative picture, such as the rise of Islam. Ishmael and Arabs were already associated with each other by the first century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. 'Hagarenes' and 'Saracenes', as names for Arabs, including the wordplay on Sarah and 'kenos' (= empty) are pre-Islamic as well.<sup>19</sup> GR contains sufficient negative material about Ishmael to be developed further. It should be kept in mind however, that some elements in PRE (and in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) refer unmistakably to Islam, such as the female names of Fatima and Ayesha and some apocalyptic sections in PRE, but I will show further on that this can be explained as later additions to the pre-Islamic narratives. There is even one curious trait which deserves to be highlighted, because it marks a turning point in the negative picture of Ishmael: PRE suggests a future reunion between Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael, and even hints at the idea that from the outset Abraham had the intention to go after them.<sup>20</sup>

The tendency of the midrash as a whole is to portray Abraham in a positive light and to interpret away the possible negative feelings of the reader towards Abraham's behavior. To achieve this, Hagar is portrayed highly negative on the one hand, whereas on the other hand her expulsion is not so bad as it might seem. The journey in the desert receives a more favourable treatment in the midrash than the previous events: God hears Ishmael's prayer and orders a well. The fact that the well had been created already in the twilight of creation suggests that this whole adventure of Hagar and Ishmael should not be explained merely as a result of human quarrels but should be regarded as a part of God's plan.

We will see that precisely this development forms the core element of the Islamic stories about Hagar and Ishmael.

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<sup>19</sup> F. Millar, 'Hagar, Ishmael, Josephus and the Origins of Islam', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993), pp. 23-45.

<sup>20</sup> The Bible itself knows of Bersheba as the location of both Hagar (Gen 21:14) and Abraham (Gen 21:31), which may have been the incentive for the midrash to suppose a reunion.

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#### *4. The story of Hagar and Ishmael in Islamic sources*

Although Hagar is not mentioned in the Qur'an, Ishmael features in company with Abraham. The cooperation between father and son in the erection of the House is known to Muslim authors from the Qur'an itself:

When we made the House a place of resort unto men, and a sanctuary, and said: "Take the station of Abraham [Maqām Ibrāhīm] for a place of prayer; and covenanted with Abraham and Ishmael saying: 'Do ye two purify my House for those who made the circuit, for those who pay devotions there, for those who bow down, and for those who adore!'" (Sūra 2:119).

It is clear that behind this succinct verse of the Qur'an, generally dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E., is a story about Abraham and Ishmael preparing together a/the sanctuary for worship. Still, the details of this story and even the exact location are not identified in the Qur'an. In what way Abraham and Ishmael arrived at that place and where they remained after that remains a mystery for those who only have the Qur'an at their disposal. However, post-Qur'anic traditions contain a wealth of explanations, additions, traditions and debates about the whereabouts of the principal figures in the Qur'an. It is tempting to view these stories as the real historical background to the Qur'an itself, but this would be methodologically wrong. They may well have originated afterwards as an ingenious commentary to account for those blank spaces in the Qur'an. Probably the story of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael only became known in Islamic circles a considerable time after the Qur'an. It then had to be harmonized with the Qur'anic account of Abraham and Ishmael building the 'House' together. As within Judaism the Biblical story of the expulsion formed a narrative unity with the post-Biblical Jewish story of Abraham's twofold visit to Ishmael, both the expulsion and the twofold visit had to be harmonized with the Qur'anic account.

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The results of this harmonization left its traces in different genres of Islamic literature, with more details added and new problems solved. The story of Hagar finding the well has been connected with utterances of the prophet Muhammad in the case of the *ḥadīth* (collection of utterances and behaviours of Muhammad), with the narration of the history of the world in the case of *ta'riḫh* (world history) and with narratives of important religious figures from Bible and Qur'an in the case of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (tales of the prophets). In all these genres of literature, integrating the story with Qur'anic quotations is a major feature.<sup>21</sup>

The *History* (*Ta'riḫh*) of al-Ṭabarī (838-923 CE) contains a rich collection of stories about Abraham building the House together with Ishmael.<sup>22</sup> In some of these collected stories about Abraham and Ishmael Hagar does not feature at all, as in the Qur'an itself. There are even stories in which Abraham is commanded to build the House and leaves his country to do so without any reference to Hagar and her role.<sup>23</sup> Probably these stories, although post-Qur'anic, reflect a stage in which Hagar's role was not yet known, or perhaps consciously disregarded because Hagar is not mentioned in the Qur'an. In other stories Abraham receives the command to build the House and leaves together with Ishmael and Hagar. Apparently, there were several stories in circulation to account for Ishmael's presence in Mecca together with his mother.<sup>24</sup> In still another story, which will concern us from now on, there is no initial mention of the command to Abraham to build the House. Hagar and Ishmael leave together with Abraham apparently because of Sarah's jealousy. In order to trace the

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<sup>21</sup> R. Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: the Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael legends in Islamic Exegesis*, New York 1990, pp. 61 ff., refers to 12 full versions of the story and some additional fragments. To our purpose, only the oldest Islamic versions are of major importance. Aviva Schussman, 'Abraham's Visit to Ishmael – the Jewish Origin and Orientation' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 49 (1980), 325-345, focuses upon the story of Abraham's later two visits to Ishmael and his wife.

<sup>22</sup> See: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh* (ed. De Goeje), I, 275-289; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 2: *Prophets and Patriarchs* (tr. W. Brinner), New York 1987, p. 69-81.

<sup>23</sup> See: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh* (ed. De Goeje), I, 275 beginning; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 2: *Prophets and Patriarchs* (tr. W. Brinner), New York 1987, p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> See for a full survey: Firestone, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-71.

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transition from the Jewish story of Hagar and Ishmael to this Islamic counterpart, we turn now to the oldest Islamic witness of this story as contained in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* from about 800 C.E.

'Abd al-Razzāq<sup>25</sup>

'Abd al-Razzāq as a source brings us to the time of 800 C.E.<sup>26</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī relates in his *Muṣannaf* (volume 5, p. 105) only one story about Hagar.

The story contains the following elements:

- Hagar wipes out her traces for Sarah with a girdle.
- Hagar arrived with Abraham (who is not yet commanded to build the House) and Ishmael *at the place of the House*.
- Angel points to Zamzam.<sup>27</sup>
- Ishmael learns Arabic from the Jurhum tribe.
- Abraham asks only the second visit for food and gets than meat and water.
- Abraham does not stay, but there is a third visit, when Abraham is commanded by God *to raise the foundations of the House*.

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<sup>25</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, Beirut 1403/1983<sup>2</sup>, vol. 5, Nr. 9107, p. 105-111. About author and work see H. Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence. Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, transl. by M.H. Katz, Leiden 2002, esp. p. 54-74; idem, "The Author and his Work in Islamic Literature of the First Centuries. The Case of 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*", in: *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003), p. 171-201; idem, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition, vol. 1/1, Leiden 2007, p. 7-9.

<sup>26</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* can be trusted as really that author's work. See: H. Motzki, 'The Author and his Work in the Islamic Literature', pp. 171-201. Motzki concludes: "He was the teacher of almost all the material contained in it" (p. 201).

<sup>27</sup> This echoes the Biblical story of Hagar's meeting with the angel in the desert near the well Lachai Roï (Gen 16:7-13). In other Islamic sources, Ishmael is the one to discover the well. See: Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (ed. De Goeje), I, 283; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 2 (tr. W. Brinner), p. 76.

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Remarkably, this oldest Islamic witness of our story debates the topic of Hagar's death. In all later versions of the story it is assumed that Hagar had died already when Abraham visited Ishmael's place. In the Jewish version, however, this is not the case as we will see. Now precisely this question is debated in 'Abd al-Razzāq (and only there). Even the almost verbatim identical version in al-Bukhārī (*Ṣaḥīḥ* 4:583) does not contain this debate. No doubt this debate points to a very early version of the story in 'Abd al-Razzāq's collection of traditions, reflecting the Jewish version. Hence 'Abd al-Razzāq's *isnād* may be trustworthy enough to date this story still earlier than 'Abd al-Razzāq's own time. I give the integral text, starting with the *isnād*:

*'Abd al-Razzāq from Ma'mar from Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. (al-) Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā'a , and the one of the two adding to the other, from Sa'īd b. Jubayr.*

He (=Sa'īd b. Jubayr ) said: "Question me, oh you young men, for I am about to leave from your midst.' So the people copiously questioned him. Then one man said to him: 'May God correct you! Have you seen the place? It is as we were relating.' He said: 'What were you relating [about it]?' He said: 'We were saying that when Abraham, upon whom be peace, arrived, the mother of Ishmael invited him to dismount, but he refused. Then she brought forth the stone. And he said, "Not like that".

After this intermezzo about Ibn Jubayr, the text continues with the *isnād*:

*Ibn Jubayr said that Ibn 'Abbās said:*

"The first woman who used a girdle was the mother of Ishmael. She used the girdle to hide her tracks from Sarah. (...)". Then the whole story follows.

Apparently the *isnād* is interrupted to relate an incident about Sa'īd b. Jubayr. Possibly he felt his end approaching and invited his disciples to ask him once more about the traditions known to him. He is then questioned by someone about the story of Ishmael and Hagar. There is no doubt that this 'someone' knew still another

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version of our story. In that version, Hagar was still alive when Abraham visited Ishmael. Not only that, but in that story Abraham refused to dismount. In the Jewish version of the story Abraham had to promise to Sarah not to dismount from his animal when visiting Ishmael because of Hagar. Obviously in the Jewish version Hagar is still alive when Abraham visits Ishmael.

In marked contrast therewith, already al-Bukhārī in one version (*Ṣaḥīḥ*, transl. by M. Muḥsin Khān vol. 4, book 55, n. 583) and al-Ṭabarī (in two versions both in his *Tafsīr* and *Ta'riḥ*) strongly emphasize that Hagar had died at the moment of Abraham's visit to Ishmael.<sup>28</sup> Now we may understand the end of the interruption: 'He said: "Not like that"', as a statement by Ibn Jubayr to the effect that he rejects the story of Hagar asking Abraham to dismount. Ibn Jubayr may even be understood to have denied that Hagar was still alive when Abraham visited Ishmael. No doubt this earliest Islamic source of the story of Ishmael's two wives implicitly testifies to the Jewish version, namely, that Abraham had promised Sarah not to dismount because of Hagar. According to the Jewish story Hagar is still alive when Abraham meets Ishmael's wives (although also in the Jewish story Abraham does not actually meet Hagar). According to this Islamic witness, it was probably Abraham's refusal to dismount that prompted Hagar to bring the stone: "Then she brought forth the stone". Probably here already the reference is to the 'footprints of Abraham'.<sup>29</sup> In later Islamic versions, this was the work of Ishmael's wife.

Several narrative motifs exist about the Maqām Ibrāhīm, the stone which is shown to this day as containing two holes. Apparently an older motif of the Maqām,

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<sup>28</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī also knows about Hagar being still alive at Abraham's visit to Ishmael, but he presumably used Jewish traditions independently of 'Abd al-Razzāq and al-Ṭabarī. See Firestone, *op. cit.*, p. 210, n.4.

<sup>29</sup> The stone on which Ibrāhīm stood. See J. Kister, "Maqām Ibrāhīm", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, vol. 6, p. 104-107. See for several identifications of *the maqām Ibrahīm*: G. Hawting, 'The Origins of the Muslim Sanctuary', in: G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*, Illinois 1982, pp. 30-33; M.J. Kister, 'Maqam Ibrahim, a stone with an inscription,' *Le Museon* 84 (1971), pp. 477-91.

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as containing Abraham's footprints occasioned by the building of the House, had been transformed and integrated into the Hagar-cycle to account for the refusal of Abraham to dismount.<sup>30</sup> The remarkable story of Ishmael's wife washing Abraham's hair, while Abraham remains on his mount while supporting himself with one foot, would account for only *one* footprint. Hence al-Ṭabarī relates the curious detail that she first washed the right side of Abraham's head and after that the left side!<sup>31</sup>

In our debate with Ibn Jubayr we find the oldest layers of this story. There already the Islamization of the visit of Abraham to Ishmael's house is at work. The story takes the existence of the stone in Mecca as a holy relic of Abraham for granted. However, Ibn Jubayr is apparently the first to assume that Hagar was dead by the time of the visit, whereas his opponent assumes, in conformity with the Jewish version, that Hagar is still alive (although also in the Jewish story Ishmael's wives, not Hagar, receive Abraham).

Apart from this remarkable interruption of the *isnād*, 'Abd al-Razzāq's story is virtually identical to al-Bukhārī's (transl. by M. Muḥsin Khān, vol. 4, book 55 n. 583). The interruption, however, is essential for dating the source. We might consider the attribution of this story to the first transmitter Ibn 'Abbās as unreliable because of his legendary status as a transmitter of Biblical and Jewish stories.<sup>32</sup> To assume the existence of a pre-Islamic Abraham cycle connected to the name of Ibn 'Abbās is likewise unwarranted.<sup>33</sup> Then there still remains the highly remarkable and unusual interruption of the *isnād* relating the debate of someone, probably a disciple, with the second transmitter Ibn Jubayr, contained only in 'Abd al-Razzāq and reflecting a stage of transmission still oral by then.<sup>34</sup> There is no reason to doubt the historicity of

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<sup>30</sup> See a picture of the Maqām Ibrāhīm on GOOGLE IMAGES, s.v. Makam Ibrahim.

<sup>31</sup> See: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (ed. De Goeje), I, 284; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 2 (tr. W. Brinner), p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> Cp. H. Motzki, 'The Origins of Muslim Exegesis. A Debate', in: H. Motzki a. o., *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, Brill Leiden 2010, p. 231 ff.

<sup>33</sup> This is what Firestone suggests, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> See also H. Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*, pp. 105-107.

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this incident. It should be noted that the later witnesses of the story of Hagar and Ishmael all mention Ibn Jubayr as the common link.<sup>35</sup> This Ibn Jubayr died in 711 or 712 C.E., which brings us back to the end of the seventh century C.E. or the beginning of the eighth century C.E. as the earliest datable moment of the reception of the Hagar story into Islam.<sup>36</sup> Al-Bukhārī likewise mentions Ibn ‘Abbās as the oldest witness and Ibn Jubayr as the common link in an *isnād* that shows strong similarity with that of ‘Abd al-Razzāq.<sup>37</sup>

Now I will investigate the Jewish source of the story of Hagar, by comparing single motifs.

### 5. Comparison with the Jewish story of Hagar and Ishmael

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<sup>35</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* I: 282. The *isnād*: al-Ḥaṣan b. Muḥammad – Yaḥyā b. ‘Abbād – Ḥammād b. Salama – ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib – Sa’īd b. Jubayr – Ibn ‘Abbās. The other version of the story contains the following *isnād*: Ya’qūb b. Ibrāhīm and al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad – Ismā’īl b. Ibrāhīm – Ayyūb – Sa’īd b. Jubayr – Ibn ‘Abbās. Both *isnād* and matn of the two versions are identical to the parallel stories in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* on Q. 14:37. Both chains end up with Muhammad’s nephew Ibn ‘Abbās and before him refer to Sa’īd b. Jubayr who is the common link of the two *isnāds*. Al-Bukhārī (*Ṣaḥīḥ*, transl. by M. Muḥsin Khān, *The Translation of the Meanings of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, New Delhi 1987, vol. 4, book 55, no. 582, 583 and 584) refers as well to Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Jubayr as the last two witnesses. Our *isnād* analysis is highly indebted to prof. Harald Motzki (Nimwegen), who generously shared his insights with us. Of course the mistakes remain our responsibility. In a forthcoming article, Motzki will offer an in depth *isnād* analysis of the stories about Hagar.

<sup>36</sup> See for the *Muṣannaf* as a possible source for the 7th century: H. Motzki, ‘The *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan’ānī as a source of authentic *aḥādīth* of the first Islamic century’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50 (1991), pp. 1-21. For Sa’īd b. Jubayr see H. Motzki, ‘Sa’īd b. Jubayr’, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd Edition, Supplement Volume*, fasc. 9-10, Leiden 2004, 697-698.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad related to me, ‘Abd al Razzāq passed on to us, that Ma’mar told us from Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā’a, and the one of the two added to the other, from Sa’īd b. Jubayr, from Ibn ‘Abbās. See also the *isnāds* to the other stories of Hagar in al-Bukhārī: ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad, Abū ‘Āmir, ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Amr, Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi’, Kathīr b. Kathīr, Sa’īd b. Jubayr, Ibn ‘Abbās. And: Aḥmad b. Sa’īd Abū ‘Abd Allāh, Wahb b. Jarīr, Jarīr, Ayyūb, ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’īd b. Jubayr, Sa’īd b. Jubayr, Ibn ‘Abbās. And: Aḥmad b. Sa’īd Abū ‘Abd Allāh, al-Anṣārī, Ibn Jurayj, Kathīr b. Kathīr, Sa’īd b. Jubayr, Ibn ‘Abbās.

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*Comparison of single motifs 1: Hagar wiping out her tracks*

In order to trace the Jewish origin of the motif in the midrash of Hagar wiping out her tracks, we have to turn to the Jewish interpretations of a Biblical text.

Gen 21:14 states: "Abraham took bread and a bottle of water and gave it to Hagar, put it on her shoulder and the child, and sent her away". It could be understood that Hagar carried both the water and the child (who incidentally should be 17 years old by then) on her shoulder. The (pre-islamic) midrash *Genesis Rabba* comments upon it, unfortunately rather succinctly: 'Abraham's house was liberal, (yet) the Bible says: "Abraham rose up early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to her"'. (Gen 21:14). Apparently this midrash wants to draw attention to the fact that a bottle of water for two persons is hardly enough in the desert. The explanation offered here is that Abraham wanted Hagar to be recognizable as a bondswoman. Further on the midrash solves the issue of the scarce supply of water by pointing to the miraculous bottle: it remained full of water. It seems, however, that this difficult Biblical passage called forth additional explanations in PRE:

"He [Abraham] sent her away with a bill of divorcement and he took the waterbarrel [*ha-dardur*] and bound it around her waist, that she had to drag it behind her to disclose that she was a bond-woman. Not only that, but also because Abraham desired to see Ishmael his son and to see the way whereon they went".

This text, although far from clear, seems to elaborate upon midrash *Genesis Rabba* 53:11: "carrying the water is the way of slaves". The attribute around her waist is not clear though: a waterbarrel (*Dardur*, PRE, ed. Luria), a skin of water (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan), a veil (*Radid*, Yalqut §95), a cloth (*Beqed*, PRE, ed. Higger, manuscript B), a chain (*Rabid*, Higger, manuscript A)<sup>38</sup>. Here three different motives seem to have collided.

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<sup>38</sup> See M. Higger, 'Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer', *Horeb* 10 (1948), p. 192. C.T.R. Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 114, offers a fuller lecture, which is surprisingly close to the Arabic accounts, but for which I have not found

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The first motif is that a waterbarrel may contain more water than a bag, as it can be dragged behind one's back. This might indicate that Abraham was not so cruel as to send mother and child away with hardly any water.

The second motif, already known from *Genesis Rabba*, is that by dragging / carrying the water Hagar would be recognizable as a bondswoman.<sup>39</sup>

The third explanation is offered both by midrash PRE and Yalqut Genesis §95: *Abraham would like to be able to trace Hagar's tracks*. No matter what attribute Hagar carried: the veil, the cloth, the chain and even the waterbarrel, all would equally serve that purpose. The expulsion would then be softened by Abraham's intention to go after them later on. This implies a future visit of Abraham, although the Bible does not relate anything about that!<sup>40</sup> The Bible merely states that both Ishmael and Isaac are present at Abraham's funeral (Gen. 25:9). Still this evidence of a reunion is rather remote from the actual story we are dealing with. The reunion between father and son is supposed to have taken place earlier, according to PRE.

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a warrant in the Hebrew versions: "He took a barrel and fastened it to her *and the girdle with which she carried it* dragging across her, to show that she was a slave; but not only for this reason, but also because Abraham wanted to see his son and to know by what road they went". (italics mine). Perhaps Hayward has been misled by the Spanish translation of M. Pérez Fernández, *Los Capítulos de Rabbí Eliezer*, Versión crítica, introducción y notas, Valencia 1984, p, 210, in which 'cintura' does not indicate 'girdle', but 'waist' or 'hips'.

<sup>39</sup> This explanation is in itself not without complications. According to Targum Ps. Jon 16:2, Sarah had already set free Hagar before. Still carrying the skin of water would indicate her status as a bondswoman, according to this Targum. On the other hand, the New Testament as well portrays Hagar as an exemplary bondswoman (Gal 4:30). This Targum does not mention the dragging. Yalqut 95 does connect the veil to the status of a bondswoman, apparently conflating two motifs, the waterbarrel and the veil.

<sup>40</sup>Note that midrash *Genesis Rabba* also does not contain a trace of the idea that Abraham reckoned with a future reunion of him with either Hagar or Ishmael, and even less of the idea that Abraham would go after them later on.

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This forms a remarkable parallel to the Qur'anic statement that Abraham and Ishmael will meet afterwards.<sup>41</sup>

Let us now turn to the Islamic evidence. 'Abd al-Razzāq (and by implication al-Bukhārī) is without any doubt aware of the midrashic motif of the attribute around Hagar's waist and of the wiping out of the traces. In conformity with the general tendency in Islamic sources, 'Abd al-Razzāq avoids a negative portrayal of Hagar and hence changes the meaning. For him, Hagar is not a bondwoman and she does not want to leave the tracks for Abraham either. As Islamic sources maintain that Abraham joins Hagar and Ishmael from the outset, there is no need for Abraham to trace the tracks. *Hagar used a girdle to hide her tracks - from Sarah.*

The encyclopaedic historian and Qur'an commentator al-Ṭabarī in his *Ta'riḫh* offers a slightly different reading, which likewise corresponds to the version in the midrash: "When she fled from Sarah, she let her garment trail behind her to wipe her footprints out".<sup>42</sup> Here it is some cloth doing the same job: hiding the tracks from Sarah. Both the girdle and the garment are derived from a version of PRE, but became thoroughly islamicized.

#### *Comparison of single motifs 2: the twofold visit of Abraham*

Then there is the twofold visit of Abraham. The midrash PRE 30 continues the whereabouts of Hagar and Ishmael with a story of Ishmael's wives:

They went through all the wilderness until they came to the wilderness of Paran and they found there streams of water and they settled there, as it is said: "He dwelt in the desert of Paran" (Gen 21:21). Ishmael sent for and married a wife from among the plains<sup>43</sup> of Moab and her name was Ephah.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Actually, both the Islamic sources and the Jewish PRE relate how Abraham comes to visit Ishmael after three years as we will see.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh* (ed. De Goeje), I, 280; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 2: *Prophets and Patriarchs* (tr. W. Brinner, New York 1987, p. 74.

<sup>43</sup> 'Arabot'. Jalqut 95: from the daughters: 'banot'

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After three years Abraham went to see Ishmael his son, having sworn to Sarah that he would not descend from his camel at the place where Ishmael lived. And he came there in the midst of the day and found there the wife of Ishmael. He said to her: "Where is Ishmael?" She said to him: "He went together with his mother to fetch fruits of palm trees from the desert". He said to her: "Give me some bread and something to drink, because I am tired from the journey in the desert". She said to him: "I have no bread and no water". He said to her: "When Ishmael comes, tell him these things and say to him: 'An old man came from the land of Canaan to see you and he said: 'The sill<sup>45</sup> of your house is not good'". When Ishmael came home, his wife told him the matter. A son of a wise man is like half a wise man.<sup>46</sup> He sent her away. His mother sent and took for him a wife from her father's house and her name was Fatuma.<sup>47</sup>

During the second visit of Abraham, Ishmael is likewise absent, now together with his mother Hagar pasturing the camels. This time Abraham receives food and water and Abraham blesses Ishmael's house. Upon his return Ishmael understands that his father's love still extends to him. The midrash PRE ends by identifying Abraham's

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<sup>44</sup> PRE Warschau ed. Luria. Manuscript Epstein, followed by Friedländer: 'Ayesha'. So Jalqut 95; Midrash Ha-Gadol on Gen 21: 21 gives no names.

<sup>45</sup> PRE, ed Luria: 'saf': sill, doorpost, threshold; PRE Epstein and Higger; Yalqut 95 and Midrash Hagadol on Gen 21:22: 'miftan', treshold. The *Sefer Hayashar*, the latest document to deal with, possibly from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (see: R. de Leeuw – van Weenen, *Sefer Ha-Yashar. Herkomst, bronnen en tendensen*, diss. Leiden 1992, p. 175) re-tells the story, adds embellishments and emphasizes the nomadic context by locating Ishmael in a 'tent' instead of a 'house' and by referring to a 'pin' instead of a 'threshold'. This feature does not prove an early origin, but is an indication of a creative re-telling of the story.

<sup>46</sup> In PRE ed. Epstein, not in PRE ed. Luria. Also in Jalqut 95 and Midrash Ha-Gadol.

<sup>47</sup> Targum Ps. Jonathan Gen 21:21 seems to summarize the story: "He [Ishmael] dwelt in the desert and took as wife Adisha. But he divorced her and his mother took Fatima as wife for him from the land of Egypt".

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third wife Keturah with Hagar, so that after the death of Sarah Abraham is supposed to reunite with Hagar (Gen 25:1 and Targum Ps. Jonathan a.l.).<sup>48</sup>

This Jewish story of Abraham's dealings with Hagar and Ishmael in PRE should be read as an exegetical device to explain the curious line in Gen. 21:21: "He [Ishmael] dwelt in the desert of Paran and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt".

Why did *his mother* choose a wife for him? The Rabbis assumed with narrative skill that Ishmael had first taken a wife himself who turned out to be a wrong match. Hence his mother took care of choosing the second wife. The story in PRE 30 elaborates this exegetical device. It is the connection to the Biblical text that serves as a proof for Aviva Schussman that this story of PRE 30 cannot be explained from Islamic influence, but must have arisen from an interpretation of the Bible. Hence she rightly regards this Jewish story as the basis of all Islamic stories.<sup>49</sup> The matter is complicated, however, by the fact that precisely here Islamic influence upon PRE is undeniable, as is clear from the names of Ishmael's wives in PRE: Ayesha and Fatima. The featuring together of these two names unmistakably refers to the wife and daughter of Mohammed respectively. These Islamic influences have caused an endless debate over whether PRE has served as the source of Islamic texts, or vice versa. A closer scrutiny of the composite nature of the text in PRE can solve this problem. PRE 30 consists of the story of the expulsion (1); the story of Abraham visiting the two wives (2); the Islamic names of the two wives, which, together, contain a strongly Islamic flavor(3); the names of Keturah's (= Hagar's ) children with a possible reference to Islam(4); an apocalyptic section about events referring to

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<sup>48</sup> Also in *Gen Rabba* 61:4 and Jerome, in Gen 25:1.

<sup>49</sup> Sussman, op. cit., 328, against Bernard Heller, Avigdor Shinan and others. Her article treats the issue of the two wives in detail in all Islamic sources. For our purpose, we can limit ourselves to the oldest witness.

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Islam, put in the mouth of a rabbi Ishmael<sup>50</sup> (5). I believe that the composite nature of PRE 30 can be proven, since the parallel versions in Jalqut 95 and Midrash Ha-Gadol on Gen 21:21 do not contain section 4 and 5. Even the Islamic names of the two wives (section 3) are lacking in Midrash Ha-Gadol.<sup>51</sup> Still these shorter versions might be explained as a condensed form of an original PRE which is more a continuing story than a commentary of Biblical verses. However, in PRE manuscript Warschau 1852, the apocalyptic section 5 is lacking as well!<sup>52</sup> Hence we may safely conclude that the earliest stratum of the text of PRE only contained the story of the expulsion and Abraham's visit to the two wives, without their names (i.e. section 1 and 2). The other sections were added later under Islamic influence, the apocalyptic section 5 probably as the last. Hence I can agree with Schussman - but now with more arguments - that the Jewish story as such (without the added names of the women) is pre-Islamic and has served as the basis for the Islamic stories.<sup>53</sup> Incidentally, in the Jewish story there is no doubt that Hagar is still alive when Abraham visits Ishmael's wives and that Abraham's promise not to descend from his mount had to do with Sarah's jealousy of Hagar!

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<sup>50</sup> Rabbi Ishmael is a Tannaitic rabbi (2d century CE), but often referred to as pseudepigraphic, here perhaps in an association with his namesake the Biblical Ishmael. The apocalyptic section of PRE 30 refers *inter alia* to the building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

<sup>51</sup> In Higger PRE manuscript B, only the second name Fatima is mentioned. D. Sidersky, *Les origines des légendes musulmanes dans le Coran et dans les Vies des Prophètes*, Paris 1933, p. 52, quotes a version of Yalqut Shimoni 95, in which the names are likewise lacking. I have not been able to trace this version, which is lacking in the critical edition of Yalqut Shimoni by D. Hyman a.o., Jerusalem 1973.

<sup>52</sup> Cp. D. Börner-Klein, *Pirke de Rabbi Elieser*, nach der Edition Venedig 1544 unter Berücksichtigung der Edition Warschau 1852, aufbereitet und übersetzt, Berlin, p. 348. This apocalyptic section of PRE is related to the *Mysteries of Simon bar Johai*, in: A. Jellinek, *Beth Hamidrash 3* (Jerusalem 1967), pp. 78-82, which reacts to Islamic events, possibly from the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>53</sup> This holds good for the birth narratives of Abraham in PRE as well. They do not need to be explained out of Islamic influence, as S. Lowin does in: *The Making of a Forefather. Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives*, Leiden 2006, p. 148 ff.

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Let us now turn to the earliest Islamic evidence. 'Abd al-Razzāq relates the story as follows:

The child (Ishmael) grew up and learnt Arabic from them (i.e. from the tribe of Jurhum) and his virtues caused them to love and admire him as he grew up and when he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman from amongst them.

The motif of the different ethnic backgrounds of the two wives has completely disappeared! The aim here is to emphasize that Ishmael, although originally Hebrew-speaking, learned Arabic and married into the pure Arabic tribe of Jurhum. Both women are from the same Jurhum tribe.<sup>54</sup> The motif that Ishmael mingles with the Jurhum to become the forefather of later Arabs seems to be an integration of pre-Islamic notions about the Arabic tribe of Jurhum into Islam.<sup>55</sup> Still, even here a Jewish tradition may have contributed to this motif, as already the pre-Christian Jewish Book of Jubilees states (assuming in contrast with Rabbinic literature that Keturah and Hagar are two different persons!):

Ismael and his sons and the sons of Keturah and her sons were together and they dwelt from Paran to Babylon in all of the land, which faces the East opposite the desert. And they mixed with each other and they are called Arabs or Ishmaelites.<sup>56</sup>

'Abd al-Razzāq / al-Bukhārī continues to relate the meeting of Abraham with the two wives of Ishmael:

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<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, al-Mas'ūdī (896-956), *Murūj al-Dhahab* (Les Praries d'or), chapter 4 (editor, pages?), seems to have preserved the motif of the different origins, as according to him the first wife is from the Amalekites and only the second wife belongs to the Jurhum tribe. Perhaps this constitutes a survival of a Jewish motif, the first woman being from the arch-enemy of Israel, whereas for al-Mas'ūdī this negative connotation is lacking. See also Schussman, *op. cit.*, p. 322, note 32.

<sup>55</sup> So Firestone, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-75.

<sup>56</sup> See also Hayward, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

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After Ishmael's mother had died, Abraham came after Ishmael's marriage in order to see his family, but he did not find Ishmael there. When he asked Ishmael's wife about him, she replied: "He has gone in search of our livelihood." Then he asked her about their way of living and their condition and she replied: "We are living in misery; we are living in hardship and destitution," complaining to him. He said: "When your husband returns, convey my salutation to him and tell him to change the threshold of his gate." When Ishmael came, he seemed to have felt something unusual, so he asked his wife: "Has anyone visited you?" She replied: "Yes, an old man of such-and-such description came and asked me about you and I informed him, and he asked about our state of living, and I told him that we were living in a hardship and poverty." On that Ishmael said: "Did he advise you anything?" She replied: "Yes, he told me to convey his salutation to you and to tell you to change the threshold of your gate." Ishmael said: "It was my father and he has ordered me to divorce you. Go back to your family." So Ishmael divorced her and married another woman from amongst them (i.e. Jurhum).

In the Islamic account of the twofold visit, the reconciliation between father and son does not play a role, as there had never been an expulsion. In contrast, the Jewish story emphasizes the reconciliation between Abraham and Ishmael:

Ishmael knew that his father's love was still extended to him, as it is said: "Like a father who pities his sons" (Ps. 103:13).

Then the Jewish account wants to emphasize the different backgrounds of the two wives, prompted by exegesis of the Bible. In contrast, in the Islamic account both wives are from the Jurhum tribe which reconnects Ishmael to a pure Arabic genealogy. The emphasis in Islamic sources that Hagar had already died may perhaps be seen in the same perspective as a polemical rebuttal: the Jewish identification of Hagar and Keturah would rob the Arabs of their ancestry.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> This suggestion has been brought forward by Aviva Schussmann, *op. cit.*

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My research into the earliest Islamic source has uncovered traces of this debate between Islamic and Jewish perspectives: in the opening *isnād* of 'Abd al-Razzāq, where Ibn Jubayr rejects the suggestion that Hagar is still alive at the time of Abraham's twofold visit to Ishmael of Abraham. Abrahams' marriage to Keturah might have been known to Islamic writers from polemical debates with Jews. Although this remains conjectural, we can ascertain that already in the oldest Islamic layers the Jewish story had been transformed in order to fit Islamic purposes. A slavish copying of Jewish stories is not in order here.

To summarize: the *isnād* analysis remains a matter of debate.<sup>58</sup> Fortunately, in this case it can be supplemented with a *matn* analysis which offers much more solid ground. This combination makes it plausible that we have here a very early Islamic narrative. This can be proven, I believe, by comparing the Islamic stories with the Jewish source in PRE. Due to a neglect of form-criticism, this Jewish story has generally been dated to a post-Qur'anic period, which in our opinion should be abandoned in favour of a pre-Qur'anic kernel.

### *Comparison of single motifs 3: Ishmael's two wives*

An important difference with the Jewish account is that according to this Islamic account, Hagar had already died. The necessity to explain the Biblical statement about Hagar choosing a wife for Ishmael was the incentive for the Jewish story, but does not exist for this Islamic writer. Likewise Sarah's jealousy does not play a role in this Islamic account of Abraham's twofold visit, as it did in the Jewish account, as we have noticed. Hagar had already died, according to Islamic accounts from the earliest witness 'Abd al-Razzāq on. It means that the prohibition to Abraham to

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<sup>58</sup> See: H. Motzki a.o., *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, Leiden 2010; H. Motzki, 'The *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī as a source of authentic *aḥādīth* of the first Islamic Century', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50 (1991), pp. 1-21; idem, 'Dating the so-called *Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*. Some Additional Remarks', in: *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 31 (2006), pp. 147-163.

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descend cannot be explained out of Sarah's attempt to prohibit intimate connections between Abraham and Hagar. In spite of that, the motif has survived:

After three years Abraham went to see Ishmael his son, having sworn to Sarah that he would not descend from his camel at the place where Ishmael lived.<sup>59</sup>

The hospitality of Ishmael's second wife is expanded in later versions of the story (as it is in midrash stories). The motif mentioned above, that Abraham even gets his hair washed while sitting on his camel and putting his foot on a stone, the *Maqām Ibrāhīm*, is an embellishment of the hospitality of Ishmael's second wife. The 'footprints' were already a special place of worship and pilgrimage by the time the twofold visit of Abraham was integrated into the story of the building of the House.<sup>60</sup>

The Islamic emphasis on Hagar's death may fulfil another function as well: it answers the question why Abraham speaks to a woman alone (i.e. Ishmael's wife) and why not to his own wife Hagar. Abraham's refusal to descend from his camel might then be interpreted as his decent wish to avoid being alone with a woman.<sup>61</sup> As stated above, its most important function in Islamic context remains that it legitimizes the pious reverence for Abraham's footprints on the stone.

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<sup>59</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (ed. De Goeje), I, 283; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 2: *Prophets and Patriarchs* (tr. W. Brinner), New York 1987, p. 77, does refer to Sarah prohibiting Abraham to descend (< *nazala*), but at the same time relates Hagar's death. Obviously the writer did not realize the connection between Sarah's prohibition to Abraham and the possible subsequent meeting of Abraham and Hagar! Brinner translates Sarah's prohibition as "to settle down" (< *nazala*), but it seems to me obvious that the text refers to Abraham riding on his mount.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, translated as: *Lives of the prophets*, (tr. W. Brinner), Leyden 2002, p. 142. See for several identifications of *the maqām Ibrāhīm*: G. Hawting, 'The Origins of the Muslim Sanctuary', in: G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*, Illinois 1982, pp. 30-33; M.J. Kister, 'Maqam Ibrahim, a stone with an inscription,' *Le Museon* 84 (1971), pp. 477-91.

<sup>61</sup> Cp. Al-Ja'qūbī (9th century), *Historiae*, ed. M. Houtsma, Leiden 1883, p?.

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Abraham visits Ishmael a third time to build the Ka'ba together.<sup>62</sup> In this way the wandering of Hagar and Ishmael, the two visits of Abraham and the building of the Ka'ba are joined together, in harmony with the verse from the Qur'an: "When Abraham was raising the foundations of the House together with Ishmael" (2:127).<sup>63</sup>

The Jewish version ends with a reconciliation between Abraham and Hagar: After the death of Sarah, Abraham again took his divorced wife [Hagar], as it is said: "And Abraham again took a wife and her name was Keturah" (Gen. 25:1).<sup>64</sup>

By identifying Hagar with Keturah, the midrash could claim that the Bible knew of that reconciliation. Of course the Islamic writers do not see the need for such a reconciliation, as according to him Abraham had never divorced Hagar in the first place!

#### *A chronology*

Although dating sources is a notoriously difficult matter, especially when it comes to the Jewish midrash, because of the lack of individual authorship, I will offer a tentative chronology.

1. The basic Jewish story about the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael and Ishmael's two wives (but without their names) should be dated after *Genesis Rabba*, but before any Islamic influence: *6<sup>th</sup> century*
2. The Qur'an, codified in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, refers to Abraham building 'the House' with Ishmael, but does not mention Hagar.
3. The well-known story in al-Bukhārī could be traced back two generations earlier than the latter, namely to 'Abd al-Razzāq. His *isnād* proved in turn to be

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<sup>62</sup> In a different narrative strand, Abraham starts to build the Ka'ba immediately after he had left Sarah together with Ishmael en Hagar.

<sup>63</sup> See for a debate about the location, the 'House' and the possibly secondary mention of Ishmael: J. Witztum, 'The Foundations of the House (Q 2:127)', *Bulletin of SOAS* 72 (2009), pp. 25-40.

<sup>64</sup> The midrash here assumes that Keturah is none other than Hagar.

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reliable up to Ibn Jubayr by comparing it the versions collected by al-Ṭabarī that are transmitted by other persons than ‘Abd al-Razzāq but also go back to Ibn Jubayr. Ibn Jubayr’s debate about different versions of the story took place around 700 C.E. Hence the integration of the Hagar story into the Qur’anic story of Abraham building ‘the House’ together with Ishmael, *dates at the latest from 700 C.E.*

4. The Hagar story in Islamic form should be considered post-Qur’anic as the Qur’an knows of a ritual in connection with the two hills (2:158), without referring to Hagar at all.
5. To the Jewish PRE story about Hagar’s wives, the Islamic names are added: at the earliest *the first half of the 8th century.*
6. PRE elaborates further upon the rise of Islam and the building of the Dome of the Rock: *end 7th century to first half of the 8th century.*
7. The Islamic stories have been collected especially by al-Ṭabarī (*around 900 CE*), testifying to still other versions of the story of Hagar and Ishmael existing already by that time and which were developed further by several other Islamic authors.

### *Conclusion*

I have demonstrated how Hagar and Ishmael have been portrayed in an increasingly negative way in the midrash, even before the rise of Islam. The culmination of that negative portrayal constitutes the story of the expulsion of mother and son as rendered by PRE. It is precisely this story, in its basic pre-Islamic form functioning as a midrash interpretation of the Bible, that was to serve as the point of departure for Islamic stories about Hagar. The first Islamic source for the story of Hagar, ‘Abd al-Razzāq, had already transformed the Jewish story into a highly positive account of Hagar as trusting in God and worthy of miracles. Simultaneously, this Islamic version harmonized the story with Qur’anic statements about Abraham building the House, connected it to an utterance of Muhammad and buttressed the ritual of the *Sa’y*, the running between the two hills in Mecca, thereby refuting pagan associations as

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secondary deviations. As for Ishmael, he becomes associated with the pure Arabic tribe of Jurhum. The story of the two wives of Ishmael, which serves in the Jewish version as a an exegesis of Gen 21:21 by adducing a derogatory statement on the Moabites and ending in a reconciliation between Abraham and Ishmael, is transformed into a foundation story of the Arabic offspring of Ishmael who marries into the Jurhum tribe.

In a way then, the Biblical account of Hagar following God's ways, resurfaces in the Islamic rendering of her, whereas the negative portrayal of Hagar in the midrash is mirrored in the negative portrayal of Sarah in Islamic sources. If anywhere, the close affinity between Judaism and Islam in dealing freely with the Biblical characters becomes apparent here in spite of the diametrically opposed results.

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