

Qur’anic Stories & Proposed Parallels in Late Antique, Apocryphal, and Gnostic Literature

This guide lists **Qur’anic passages** often discussed in scholarship for their **literary or thematic parallels** with earlier and contemporary late antique traditions (Jewish midrash, Christian apocrypha/legends, Syriac romances, and some Gnostic texts). Parallels **do not prove dependence**; they may reflect **shared Near Eastern motifs**, oral circulation, or later exegetical development. Use this as a reading list to explore the intertexts.

Story / Theme	Qur’an	Proposed Parallels (work & section)	Brief note
Mary under the palm; stream	19:22–26 (Maryam)	Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 20 (Flight to Egypt; Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream)	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream
Jesus forms birds from clay	3:49; 5:110	Infancy Gospel of Thomas 2; Arabic Infancy Gospel 36	SP18 Jesus fashions clay birds and they live
Companions of the Cave (Sleepers)	18:9–26 (al-Kahf)	Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (late antique apocryphal)	Yusuf have a sleep in a cave
Dhul-Qarnayn’s journeys; iron barrier	18:83–88 (al-Kahf)	Syriac Alexander Legend / Alexander Romance (Ptolemy’s gain Alexander’s magic)	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream
Harut & Marut at Babylon	2:102 (al-Baqarah)	Jewish ‘Watchers’ traditions: 1 Enoch; Jubilees; Angel-Magical lore	Angels in a story motif resembles Second
Raven teaches burial to Cain	5:31 (al-Ma’idah)	Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 21	Raven demonstrates burial, leading Cain to
Abraham cast into the fire	21:68–70 (al-Anbiya)	Genesis Rabbah 38:13; related midrashim	Midrashic accounts describe Nimrod casting
Angels told to bow to Adam; Iblis refused	2:34; 7:11–18; 17:61; 18:50; 20:16	Life of Adam & Eve; Cave of Treasures; 2 Enoch; Late antique Jewish (Christian) texts feature	Late antique Jewish (Christian) texts feature
Lots cast for Mary’s guardianship	3:44 (al-Imran)	Protoevangelium of James 8–9 (rods/lots choos	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream
Solomon, the hoopoe, and the Queen of Sheba	27:20–28 (al-Naml)	Targum Sheni to Esther (midrashic expansions	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream
Crucifixion denied / substitution motif	4:157 (an-Nisaa)	Gnostic/docetic strands (e.g., Irenaeus on Basilides, the Secret Treatise of the Great Seth)	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream
Mary’s consecration & temple upbringing	3:36–37 (al-Imran)	Protoevangelium of James 7–8	Mary dedicated to Temple service and raised
Birds & life from God (Abraham’s dream)	2:260 (al-Baqarah)	Aggadic and apocryphal motifs of re	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream
The ant and speech of creatures before Solomon	27:18–19, 27:20	Late Jewish folklore/aggadah about Solomon’s dominion over creatures	Qanah bedictr Mary under a palm, palm tree, and a stream

Abbreviated sources: Pseudo-Matthew; Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Arabic Infancy Gospel; Protoevangelium of James; Seven Sleepers legend; Syriac Alexander Legend / Alexander Romance; 1 Enoch; Jubilees; Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer; Genesis Rabbah; Life of Adam & Eve; Cave of Treasures; Targum Sheni; Nag Hammadi (Second Treatise of the Great Seth).