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Rüdiger Schmitt

See also →Israel, People of

Israelites

→Israel, People of; →Israelite Religion; →Israelites, Children/Sons of Israel

Israelites, Children/Sons of Israel

The gentilic "Israelite" (*Yiśrĕʾēlî/t*) occurs only five times in the HB (Lev 24:10–11 [4 times]; 2 Sam 17:25). In Lev 24 (in the context of the Holiness Code), the term refers to a problematic "mixed marriage" between certain Israelites. The text in 2 Sam 17:25 is possibly corrupt (cf. *BHS*).

In most cases where the term "Israelites" appears in English translations, the Hebrew is *bĕnê Yiśrāʾēl*, literally, "sons of Israel" (630 times in the HB), while the feminine equivalent "daughters of Israel," is attested only in Jdg 11:40 and 2 Sam 1:24. In addition, *ʾîš/ʾanšê Yiśrāʾēl,* literally, "man/men of Israel," is found (59 times) and, of course, the name "Israel" most often refers to the people of Israel.

1. Theological Perspective. The HB/OT establishes the unity of "Israel" by the fiction of an eponymous hero named "Israel" in Gen 32:29, 33. This sense is maintained until Exod 1:1, 7 with reference to the transition of the story of the patriarchs to the story of the Exodus. From Exod 1:9 onwards, the "sons of Israel" are clearly identified with the people (*ʿam*) of Israel. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, and Judges, the designation "sons of Israel" has two nuances. First, it has a cultic meaning, namely, the Israelites as a cultic assembly (*ʿēdâ*, as in the Priestly work from Exod 16:9–10 onwards). The Deuteronomistic History sets forth the idea of collective offenses against cultic or religious preceptions by the "sons of Israel," e.g., in the so-called Richterschema (Judg 3–4, 2 Kings 17). Secondly, Numbers elaborates the notion of the "sons of Israel" as a homogenous "brotherhood in arms" (Num 1; 22; 26; 31; 33–34) which anticipates the seizure of the holy land or appropriate stereotyped texts in Josh and Judg.

2. Historical Perspective. In modern reconstructions of a history of ancient Israel, the idea of a homogenous people of "Israel"/the "sons of Israel" becomes clearly fictitious. The stele of Merneptah (13th cent. BCE), the Tell-Dan-Inscription (9th cent. BCE), and the Mesha-Inscription (9th cent. BCE) mention "Israel" in different manners, but they do not corroborate the stories of a collectively behaving "Israel" as told in Exodus–Judges. Moreover, there is no mention of "Israel" in the Mesopotamian sources, which only refer to "Samaria" or "House of Omri." Thus, it seems likely that the exilic and post-exilic concept of a homogenous people called "Israel"/"sons of Israel" is closely related to the composition of the biblical narratives as an aboriginal history of the contemporary "Israel." Interestingly, the term "Israel" is used both by Judeans/Jews and Samaritans (e.g., in the inscriptions of Delos) which may depend on the common use of the tradition of the Torah.

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Sebastian Grätz

Isrāʾīliyyāt

Muslim authors use the Arabic term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* to refer to traditions preserved in classical and medieval Islamic sources that they associate with *Banū Isrāʾīl* – the qurʾānic term for Israelites and, by extension, Jews and sometimes Christians as well. The plural noun *Isrāʾīliyyāt* is a back-formation from usages such as *aḥādīth Banī Isrāʾīl* and *akhbār Isrāʾīliyya* (traditions or reports of the Israelites). Numerous approximations for the term in English have been proposed, such as "Israelite lore," "Judaica," "Israelitica," "Jewish antiquities," and so forth, though in academic parlance the term is seldom translated in order to preserve its unique connotations.

The term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* is not an objective designation; nor is there a clearly demarcated corpus of such material. Rather, traditions that circulated in

the early Islamic community that were preserved in classical and medieval works of history, biography, Ḥadīth (the words and deeds of the prophet and his companions), *tafsīr* (Qurʾān interpretation), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and other genres were deemed to be *Isrāʾīliyyāt* by later commentators, often being placed in this category on rather vague and arbitrary grounds. The term is so deeply embedded in modern academic discussions of the phenomenon of the Jewish "influence" on Islam that avoiding it is difficult. However, it presupposes a range of politically problematic attitudes and claims, and casual use of it conveys the mistaken impression that there is a corpus of material that is conventionally recognized or readily identified as *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, or that the term can be sheared of its pejorative associations. Overall, the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* cannot and should not be taken simply as a shorthand for "traditions borrowed and adapted from biblical/Jewish/Christian sources." As such, this article will not address the broader phenomenon of "borrowed" biblical or parabiblical traditions in Islam per se, but rather the nature of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* as an ideological construct.

Broadly speaking, although the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* may occasionally be used neutrally, in the vast majority of instances in which it is invoked in both traditional and modern Islamic sources, it carries significant negative connotations. In contemporary parlance, the association with Jews and Jewish sources is almost always understood to mark these traditions as false, unreliable, and even corrosive to orthodoxy. The term's increasingly aggressive use to demarcate and cast aspersions on traditions supposedly transmitted to Muslims from *Ahl al-Kitāb* is connected to shifting conceptions of authority within Islamic scholarly culture from the later Middle Ages to the present day due to the rise of Salafism. Specifically, among Salafīs, significant symbolic capital accrues to authors who claim to rely only on the pure tradition associated with the prophet and his companions while rejecting traditions marred by the taint of corrupting outside influences, especially those connected to Jews. Thus, polemic against *Isrāʾīliyyāt* may have very little to do either with the objective content of transmitted material or its historical origins. The most one might say is that as a descriptive category, traditions marked as *Isrāʾīliyyāt* often tend to have a palpably "biblical" ambience, dealing with themes such as cosmology, prophetology, and eschatology. This is not due to the actual background of such traditions, since they may or may not ultimately derive from Jewish or Christian scriptural and parascriptural sources. Rather, reports dealing with such themes attracted the condemnation of critics concerned to purify the received tradition of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* because of the perception that they were suspect on dogmatic grounds. The allegation of Jewish origin therefore functions as a prescriptive statement about the unreliability of the traditions in question, and the folly of trusting in the lore of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* or their corrupted scriptures more broadly.

The concept of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* is the result of the scrutiny of the received tradition by specific schools of interpreters within the medieval and modern Islamic community who have been concerned above all with sanitizing the tradition, reinforcing communal boundaries, and constructing an idealized image of a "pure" Islam. It is the subjective, prescriptive, and politically motivated nature of the critique of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* that vitiates (or should vitiate) its use in academic research. It is true that in some cases, critical scholarly analysis may confirm that a given tradition denounced as *Isrāʾīliyyāt* may have actually derived from a biblical, Jewish, or Christian precursor, seemingly justifying the use of this label. An obvious example would be the traditions on S 37 : 99–113 concerning the son Abraham was commanded to sacrifice. Although the Qurʾān's testimony is ambiguous here, it is clear that many early Muslim exegetes identified the anonymous son as Isaac due to a direct or indirect reliance on the Bible and Jewish and Christian traditions of interpretation. This would appear to vindicate the rejection of these traditions as *Isrāʾīliyyāt* by later exegetes who favored identifying the son of the sacrifice as Ishmael. Here, then, a normative-prescriptive identification of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* coincides with a historical-critical analysis of source material.

However, the situation is rendered more complicated by the fact that some traditions termed *Isrāʾīliyyāt* by later critics may have been identified as such because they express ideas that critics saw as overly fantastic, theologically problematic, or simply irrelevant, or that perhaps appeared too similar to the lore of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* or "People of the Book," without having any objectively discernible connection to non-Muslim sources (at least those known to modern scholarship). Further, in many cases, traditions that contemporary scholars might readily recognize as biblical, Jewish, or Christian in derivation escaped criticism as *Isrāʾīliyyāt*. Moreover, while many traditions directly attributed to sources such as the famous early Jewish convert Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. ca. 650), or to early collectors of the lore of *Ahl al-Kitāb* such as Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 728), have been condemned by critics of *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, much that was transmitted in the name of these figures overlaps with traditions from other transmitters deemed to be "orthodox" and perfectly reliable. All this underscores the arbitrary, unsystematic, and ideological nature of the discourse surrounding *Isrāʾīliyyāt* and the influence (actual or putative) of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* on the development of Islamic tradition.

Seminal modern scholarship on the disciplines of historiography and Qurʾān exegesis has tended

to accept and reinforce the traditional accounts of the transmission of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* as the result of direct consultation of early Muslims with *kitābī* informants. Goldziher, Abbott, Dūrī, Sezgin, Khoury, and others examined the impact of Jewish influences in particular in shaping the early tradition, lending credence to the idea that the line between "native" and "foreign," Islamic and non-Islamic, traditions was already self-evident in the first century AH. Proceeding from this basic assumption, some scholars echoed the criticism of Muslim jurists and exegetes in casting the so-called *Isrāʾīliyyāt* as fundamentally spurious, the residuum of an influx of material of an irrational, folkloristic, "popular" nature into the mainstream of the authentic, sober, reliable tradition handed down from the prophet and companions. Others, however, sought to approach the transmission of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* by adopting a more sophisticated sociological perspective on the phenomenon, for example by conjecturing that transmitting the lore of their ancestral communities in Islamic guise provided an important source of social capital for the *mawālī*, converts and descendants of converts from Judaism and Christianity, in early Islamic times (e.g., Newby 1980). Contemporary scholarship increasingly tends to view the textual artifacts of Muslim exchanges with members of other communities in a more nuanced way, rejecting the traditional paradigm of debt and influence that once dominated the field in favor of seeing the appropriation and adaptation of biblical and parabiblical materials as a culturally vital, creative activity. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* can be stripped of negative connotations and deployed in a more neutral fashion to refer to the results of these complex processes, given the overwhelmingly polemical nature of the historical discourse surrounding it.

In the 1990s, some scholars began to recognize the importance of the discursive context in which the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* has actually been used. That is, less emphasis came to be placed on the attempt to reconstruct the environment in and processes through which *Isrāʾīliyyāt* had supposedly been disseminated in the early period, in favor of analysis of the term's function in the works of various medieval authors, especially Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373). Thus, in a groundbreaking 1993 article, Calder identifies Ibn Kathīr's Qurʾān commentary as the beginning of a radical break with the hermeneutic of the older tradition of Sunnī *tafsīr*, "condemning the literary tradition, rejecting story, and finding contamination from external sources (Jewish lies)" (121). According to Calder, Ibn Kathīr's exegesis rested on a novel rebellion against the so-called *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, artificially partitioning what he held to be true and purely Islamic from outside incursions from traditions of the *Ahl al-Kitāb*. Strikingly, as both Calder and Mirza (2013) note, the Salafī hermeneutic advanced by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr could make use not only of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth but philology and even biblical study as well, but only in the service of advancing their particular dogmatic claims. For example, against the mendacious teachings of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* and those in the Muslim community who mistakenly trusted in their testimony, Ibn Kathīr invokes both the Qurʾān *and* the Bible to determine that it was Ishmael who had really been the son God commanded Abraham to sacrifice.

Calder's work points the way to a general recognition of the origin and significance of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* as a fundamentally polemical construct in Salafī discourse. This is further supported by the 1999 study of Tottoli that demonstrates that the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* was not coined until the 10th century CE; it is then employed unsystematically and only attested sporadically until the time of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr, in whose works the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* occurs with significant frequency and a distinctly negative connotation. As they used it, *Isrāʾīliyyāt* connotes "foreign" traditions of a suspect nature that lack the authority of traditions of the prophet through rigorously scrutinized chains of transmitters – that is, of the authentic Sunna. That this is a novel development in the thought of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr is indicated by the fact that even they used the term in a rather vague and arbitrary way. It is not until the modern era that the polemic first articulated by these medieval jurists reached a wider audience along with other aspects of the ideology first articulated by Ibn Taymiyya – "a dimly defined salaf, a stringent reading of revealed texts, and a rigid dogmatic agenda" (Calder 1993: 124–5).

It was thus only in the 20th century that conscious efforts were made to prune objectionable *Isrāʾīliyyāt* from the corpus of received traditions in various genres, as the Taymiyyan critique of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* was both naturalized and radicalized by modern authors of this ideological tendency. Central in this regard were the Egyptian scholar-activists Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1940), and Maḥmūḍ Abū Rayya (d. 1970), Salafī pioneers whose work reflects an escalating critique of the received tradition and the ethos of *taqlīd* (imitation of scholarly precedent) in general and *Isrāʾīliyyāt* more specifically. For them, the promotion of Islamic revival and polemic against pernicious foreign influences went hand in hand: they saw the cultural, religious, and political threat posed by colonizing powers in their own day as basically similar to, or even a continuation of, the insidious infiltration of the Muslim community by Jewish, Christian, and Persian "influences" in the time of Islam's origins. Riḍā and Abū Rayya were particularly prone to link the invasive nature of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* in Islamic tradition to a conception of perennial Jewish treachery and subversion; this is expressed most

vividly in Abū Rayya's oft-cited article "Kaʿb al-Aḥbār: The First Zionist." Similarly, with Zionism increasingly perceived as an existential threat not only to Arab political aspirations but Islam itself after the 1967 Six Day War, numerous other activists sought to inculcate a general recognition of the danger to Muslim morals and morale presented by *Isrāʾīliyyāt*. Thus, at the Fourth Congress of the Academy of Islamic Research in 1968, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Dhahabī (d. 1977) – shaykh of al-Azhar and one of the leading religious scholars of Egypt of the twentieth century – advocated an international campaign to purify all available publications of traditional works of religious learning of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* in order to remove one of the proximate causes of weakness that had undermined the Arabs from within.

Over the last several decades, the massive proliferation of works (and now online content) criticizing the authors and traditionists who transmitted *Isrāʾīliyyāt* encourages the misperception that this material has always been readily distinguished from traditionally "Islamic" material, as well as that *Isrāʾīliyyāt* has been a problem from the first emergence of Islam (and generally recognized as such). Exegetes of the early, classical, and medieval periods are regularly denounced for relying on this spurious lore and confusing Muslims by negligently allowing it to seem genuinely authoritative. This is self-evidently a rather skewed perspective, given the sheer anachronism of projecting both the term *Isrāʾīliyyāt* and the underlying concept back before the 10th century. The impulse to sanitize the received tradition has led to an overwhelming emphasis on those authors who critiqued *Isrāʾīliyyāt* in favor of the pure tradition of the *salaf* as solely authoritative for contemporary Muslims. As a result, the *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr is now far and away the most widely distributed traditional commentary on the Qurʾān in the Islamic world. Although he remains an important figurehead for the campaign against *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, present-day Salafīs have actually found Ibn Kathīr's own efforts against this material somewhat wanting; at least one contemporary expurgated version of his *tafsīr* seeks to remove the *Isrāʾīliyyāt* that he inadvertently included in his work. Similarly, the judgment of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr that *Isrāʾīliyyāt* traditions that do not contradict the truth of Islam may be tolerated has proved inadequate for some, giving rise to a whole new genre of literature, that of *qiṣaṣ al-Qurʾān*. Seemingly inspired by Ibn Kathīr's preference for *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān* (interpreting the Qurʾān through reference to the Qurʾān), works of *qiṣaṣ al-Qurʾān* collect the tales of the prophets presented in the Qurʾān but omit any reference to the rich apocryphal tales and narrative expansions that are characteristic of traditional works of *tafsīr* and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. Thus, in contemporary times, the polemical discourse surrounding *Isrāʾīliyyāt* has become even more extreme: while for Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr *Isrāʾīliyyāt* indicates traditions that are potentially, even frequently, in opposition to the truth of Islam as known from the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth, for many contemporary ideologues, it designates something *intrinsically* untrue and diametrically opposed to Islam as they define it.

It cannot be denied that the nascent Islamic community was permeable to a variety of outside influences during the decades of the establishment of the caliphal state and the spread of Islam through the Arab conquests. Every aspect of the emergent tradition was in some way shaped by a variety of contacts between the early Muslims and members of the various communities drawn into the rapidly expanding *Dār al-Islam*, and thus it is natural that these contacts had a palpable impact on the learned discourses of scriptural exegesis, jurisprudence, historical inquiry, and so forth that coalesced out of the oral lore of the Muslim *umma* in its formative period. The tradition preserves many traces of its own origins in the interactions between Jews, Christians, and the early Muslims, and for a time the traditions associated with *kitābī*s, converts, and the Muslims who collected the lore of *Ahl al-Kitāb* were openly accepted – at least by some. This is expressed, for example, in a well-known tradition in which the prophet enjoins his people to "relate traditions from Banū Isrāʾīl, for there is no harm in it" (*ḥaddithū ʿan Banī Isrāʾīla wa-lā ḥaraja*); this injunction was, at least formerly, understood to authorize transmission of traditions from the Bible and lore of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* as long as they are consonant with the Qurʾān and the prophet's own teachings. It is this rich, complex historical phenomenon that the critique of the *Isrāʾīliyyāt* distorts, flattens, and reduces to a caricature in the construction of a fundamentalist myth of origins that idealizes a pure Islam jeopardized by outside influences. In classical tradition, the commerce in ideas between Arab Muslims and members of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* that had prevailed in early Islamic times was openly acknowledged; though critical at times, aspects of this process appear to reflect a positive valuation of both the process and results of "borrowing." This stands in stark contrast to the pervasive stigma that later became attached to lore designated as *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, part of a broader tendency to portray outsiders, especially Jews, as the source of sectarianism, heresy, and subversion within Islam. This is a tendency that has been deeply exacerbated by the political and religious tensions of the modern age, and one which shows no signs of abating.

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Michael E. Pregill

Issachar

1. Son of Jacob

Issachar (MT *Yiśśākār*; LXX Ισσαχαρ) is the ninth son of Jacob, mentioned in Genesis (esp. chs. 30 and 49; see "Issachar [Son of Jacob]").

John E. Anderson

2. Son of Obed-edom

Issachar (MT *Yiśśākār*; LXX Ισσαχαρ) is the name of a Levite, mentioned once in 1 Chr 26 : 4–5 as the seventh of Obed-edom's eight sons, and namesake of the tribal ancestor (Gen 30 : 15–18; 49 : 14–15). With his father's clan he served at the southern gate of the temple precinct and the storehouses related to it (26 : 15). By bracketing their list (26 : 4–8) with the Korahite family of Meshelmiah (26 : 2–3, 9), the Chronicler presents Issachar and Obed-edom clan as descendants of Levi through Korah (1 Chr 26 : 1, 19; 9 : 17–20).

Daniel Bodi

Issachar (Son of Jacob)

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Issachar is the ninth son of Jacob, the fifth by Leah. Despite no significant actions recorded of him in the Bible, Issachar's name lived on as the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of Issachar. The name thus has a double referent: the son of Jacob and the tribe of Israel.

1. Son of Jacob. Issachar's name is etymologically uncertain. The Genesis text indicates two folk etymologies tied to the child bearing rivalry between Jacob's two wives, Rachel and Leah (Gen 30: 14–18). Rachel, the favored wife, has Jacob's affection but is barren; Leah, the unfavored wife, is by contrast fertile. Her fertility, however, appears to wane after she births Judah. Reuben, Leah's firstborn son, finds some mandrakes (a plant associated with fertility and sexual desire and perhaps also believed to carry aphrodisiac powers, cf. Song 7 : 13), which garners the barren Rachel's interest. Leah agrees to give Rachel some of the mandrakes in exchange for Leah sharing Jacob's bed that evening. Leah tells Jacob she has "surely hired" (*śākōr śĕkartîkā*) him with Reuben's mandrakes, and their sexual encounter leads to Issachar's conception. Upon his birth, Leah offers a second folk etymology: "God has given me my hire" (*śĕkārî*) (Gen 30 : 18). This paronomastic use of the root *ś–k–r* connects the name both to an activity by Leah (the purchasing) and the hidden activity of God in providing a child for the unloved Leah.

These two folk etymologies serve more of a theological than a historical function, and attempts to arrive at the historical etymology of Issachar continue to be complicated and problematic. Beyerle, preceded by over a century by Wellhausen, suggests following the well-known convention of affixing a divine name to one's personal name, resulting in a connection with the Egyptian deity Sokar so that the name would be "devotee of Sokar." *BDB* offer another possible derivation, from *yēš sākār*, "there is recompense," which mirrors the Ketib. *KB* suggests connections with *ʾîš śākār*, "man of wages," which makes sense given Jacob's blessing in Gen 49 : 15 that Issachar "bowed his shoulder to the burden, and became a slave at forced labor." The same name is probably also attested at Mari as *yaskur-il*, "may god be gracious."

2. Tribe of Israel. The biblical text carries forward the complexity inherent in the name Issachar with an uncertain evaluation of the ancestor and the tribe named for him. In Jacob's final blessing in Gen 49: 14–15 Issachar is described as such: "Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds; he saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant; so he bowed his shoulder to the burden, and became a slave at forced labor." Some contend that this likely archaic text is a negative evaluation of the tribe for submitting to slave labor or forming relationships with the indigenous Canaanite populations that were worrisome or potentially destructive to the type of community intended. Others argue that the phrase *lĕmas-ʿōbēd* need not carry a negative connotation of forced slave labor but rather, as evident in the LXX's rendering "and he became a farmer," represents the tribe's transition from a nomadic to a pastoral way of life.

Even if one regards Jacob's blessing as one of contempt, Issachar seems to have been able to rehabilitate itself. Perhaps the tribe's most laudatory