As is generally known, Abraham Geiger’s much quoted and groundbreaking work *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* (originally 1833, 2nd ed. 1902) represents the first attempt to systematically examine Jewish elements in the Qur’anic tradition. One striking aspect of this work spanning some two hundred pages is, however, that while the narrative sections of the Qur’an are analyzed exhaustively, those legal rules Muhammad is supposed to have adapted from Judaism are dealt with in a mere seven pages. And moreover, in these seven pages Geiger focuses almost exclusively on rules for prayer and a few provisions concerning the status of women in divorce proceedings.

It would seem that such a remarkable imbalance did not escape Geiger’s attention, for at the end of the respective section he writes:

> As Muhammad had very little intention of imposing a new code of individual laws, since his aim was much more the spread of new purified religious opinions, and as in the matter of practice he was far too much of an Arab to deviate from inherited usages, unless they came directly into opposition to these higher religious views, it is easily to be explained how so few borrowings are to be found in this part and much even of what is adduced might perhaps be claimed to be general oriental custom.\(^1\)

This view of Muhammad as being exclusively a preacher of “purified religious opinions” who only intervened in legal issues in exceptional cases, not undisputed in today’s scholarship on Islam, is undoubtedly due in part to Geiger’s very own form of liberal religiosity, which ascribed the legal dimensions of Judaism only a subordinate role and

\(^1\) I am grateful to Paul Bowman for his help in translating this article from the original German.

\(^1\) Geiger, *Judenthume*, 88f. Geiger’s work was translated into English by F.M. Young in 1896 under the title *Judaism and Islam*. 
so sought to recognize the same in Muhammad’s proclamations.\(^2\) Despite this, the direction Geiger set with this specific emphasis would seem to have still exerted considerable influence on subsequent Qur’anic research. Here, great attention has been and still is paid to Jewish influences in theology and narratives—foremost Heinrich Speyer’s *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Quran* (1931) springs to mind, a work that for instance R. Paret continually refers to in his Qur’anic commentary\(^3\)—whereas a similar reference work for the legal passages is conspicuous by its absence.

It should be remembered, however, that any search for possible Jewish influences on legal conceptions and rules in the Qur’an touches on an extremely sensitive area of current discussion on the beginnings of Islamic law. At issue in these ever stormy and controversial debates are both the continuity of Qur’anic and later Islamic law as well as locating key institutions of Islamic law in the pre-Islamic Hijaz or the Christian, Sasanian, and Jewish cultures of the conquered territories in Syria, Persia, or Iraq. Representative of the seemingly unbridgeable differences are, on the hand, P. Crone, who in her work emphatically advocates the influence—in part mediated through Judaism—of Roman provincial law,\(^4\) and W. Hallaq on the other, who for his part repudiates this claim no less vehemently.\(^5\)

Despite the fact that the possibility of Jewish influence on early Islamic law is at least once again being considered in current debates,\(^6\) a comprehensive and open-ended (if not open-minded) examination into Qur’anic legal conceptions in the light of Jewish traditions has

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\(^2\) Geiger’s portrayal is closely related to the position taken decades later by Schacht, *Islamic Law*, 10–14, and criticised by Goitein, “Muslim Law.” For a more recent evaluation of the role played by legislation in the Quran, see Hallaq, “Law.”

\(^3\) Paret, *Koran*, passim.

\(^4\) Crone, *Roman Law*, 12: “We may begin by noting that there was no Roman law in Iraq except in so far as it had arrived in the guise of Jewish law”; see also the article by the same author, “Qasāma.”

\(^5\) See W. Hallaq’s critic of Crone in “Provincial and Roman Influences,” and his introduction to the essay collection *The Formation of Islamic Law*, XXIV–XXVI.

\(^6\) In *Origins*, 4, W. Hallaq expresses his openness to viewing Qur’anic law in the context of Jewish (and Semitic-Mesopotamian) law, despite his skepticism towards any Western influences infusing Islamic law: “While law as a doctrine and legal system does not appear to have been on the Prophet’s mind during most of his career, the elaboration of a particularly Islamic conception of law did begin to emerge a few years before his death. The legal contents of the Quran, viewed in the larger context of already established Jewish law and the ancient Semitic-Mesopotamian legal traditions, provide plentiful evidence of this rising conception.”