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## **ISRA'ILİYAT AS AN INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE BRIDGE AND REFLECTIONS ON THE OTTOMAN FOLK CULTURE\***

*KÜLTÜRLERARASI BİR BİLGİ KÖPRÜSÜ OLARAK İSRAİLİYAT VE OSMANLI  
HALK KÜLTÜRÜNDEKİ YANSIMALARI*

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### **Abstract**

Isra'iliyat is the general term used to specify knowledge transferred to Islamic culture from some other cultures including Jewish being primary, Christian, Persian, Indian, central Asian, and even Chinese cultures. Since most of this knowledge is transferred from Jews, known as The Israelites, it is called as isra'iliyat. Nevertheless, there was also a considerable amount of knowledge flux from surrounding cultures of the Middle East, where Islam originates. There was a significant knowledge and information flow especially from Christianity, which is a major religion in the region and Byzantine/Greek culture which was a Christian society then. In addition, Persian culture, a significant cradle of culture and civilization in the region, Indian and Chinese cultures, two of the oldest in the world, and fragments of Central-Asian Turkish/Shaman culture constituted the rich repertory of the Islamic culture.

Israeli news and information had started transferring to Islamic culture as early as the Prophet Mohammed era. During this era, especially Jewish religious culture had attracted Muslims. Yet the Koran was frequently mentioning the past of the Jewish people, Israeli history, scriptures, prophets, and other major personalities. To get a broader sight into such information, Muslims often questioned Jewish around them and took their answers as a reference. In the subsequent periods, parallel to the expansion of the Islamic territory, an information flow started from newly encountered cultures too.

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Reactions to these Israeli items, which were present in many sources, were not missing. Holy Koran and Prophet Mohammed remarked either affirmative or dissident views on this issue and specified a framework towards these Israeli items. Subsequent Muslim scholars responded to the issue accordingly. Nevertheless, one way or another, these Israeli items found themselves a place in the majority of the sources and had a serious impact on readership of these sources.

As yet explained, isra'iliyat had a major effect on the faith-based culture of the Muslim Ottomans. There was plentiful Israeli information in the religious sources that Ottomans benefited. These items grabbed attention of public since they were of mythical essence, fantastic and reflected dreams of ordinary people. This involvement was very effective on shaping their religious culture around these mythical acquaintances.

In this study, these issues will be held and dwelled on with examples and how isra'iliyat can function as a communication bridge between cultures.

**Key Words:** Isra'iliyat, The Israelites, Islamic culture, other cultures, knowledge flux, intercultural bridge

### Öz

İsrâiliyât, başta Yahudi kültüründen olmak üzere Hıristiyan, Fars, Hind, Orta Asya ve hatta Çin kültüründen İslam kültürüne geçmiş bilgilerin genel adıdır. Bu bilgiler daha çok İsrâiloğulları diye bilinen Yahudilerden geçtiği için İsrâiliyât diye isimlendirilmiştir. Ancak İslam'ın ortaya çıktığı bölge olan Orta Doğu'ya yakın olan diğer kültürlerden de önemli miktarda bilgi akışı olmuştur. Bilhassa bölgenin önemli bir dini olan Hıristiyanlıktan ve yine o zamanlar Hıristiyan bir toplum olan Bizans/Grek kültüründen de önemli miktarda bilgi ve haber İslam kültürüne girmiştir. Bunun yanında yine bölgenin önemli bir medeniyet ve kültür havzası olan İran kültürü, dünyanın en eski kültürlerinden birini oluşturan Hind ve Çin kültürü ve özellikle de Orta Asya bölgesinde yaşayan Türk/şaman kültürüne ait bazı kültürel unsurlar da bir ölçüde İslam kültür hazinesi arasındaki yerini almıştır.

İsrâilî haber ve bilgiler İslam'ın peygamberi Hz. Muhammed döneminden itibaren İslam kültürüne geçmeye başlamıştır. Bu dönemde ağırlıklı olarak Yahudi din kültürü Müslümanların ilgisini çekmiştir. Zira Kur'an, Yahudilerin geçmişinden, İsrâiloğulları tarihinden, onların kutsal kitaplarından, peygamberlerinden ve diğer önemli şahsiyetlerinden sık sık bahsediyor, onlara ait bazı bilgiler sunuyordu. Kur'an'ın uzun uzadıya bahsetmeyip sadece temasta bulunduğu bu hususlarla ilgili geniş bilgi almak üzere Müslümanlar, aralarında yaşayan Yahudilere sorular soruyor, onların verdiği cevapları konuyla ilgili önemli bir bilgi olarak alıyorlardı. Daha sonraki dönemlerde İslam coğrafyasının gelişmesine ve genişlemesine paralel olarak yeni karşılaşılan kültürlerden de bilgi akımı meydana gelmeye başladı.

Pek çok İslâmî kaynakta yer alan isrâilî haberlere zaman zaman tepkiler de gösterilmiştir. Bu konuda Müslümanların kutsal kitabı Kur'an ve yine Müslümanların peygamberi Hz. Muhammed olumlu veya olumsuz tepkiler

ortaya koymuş, buna göre isrâilî haberler karşısında takınılacak tavır konusunda bir çerçeve belirlenmiştir. Diğer Müslüman âlimler de belirlenen bu çerçeve içerisinde bir takım tepkiler geliştirmişlerdir. Ancak öyle veya böyle bu isrâilî haberler İslâmî kaynakların büyük bir kısmına girmiş, bu kaynakları okuyanlar üzerinde de ciddi bir etki meydana getirmiştir.

Bu cümleden olarak Müslüman Osmanlı halkının inanca dayalı kültürleri üzerinde de isrâiliyâtın büyük bir etkisi olmuştur. Osmanlı halkının beslendiği ve bolca istifade ettiği dini kaynaklarda çok sayıda isrâilî haber ve bilgi yer almıştır. Bu bilgiler çoğunlukla efsânevî bir nitelik arzettiği, insanın hayâl gücünü süslediği ve idealini yansıttığı için halk tarafından büyük ilgi görmüştür. Bu ilgi, onların dini kültürlerinin bu efsânevî bilgi ve haberler çerçevesinde şekillenmesinde oldukça etkili olmuştur.

İşte bu çalışmada bu hususlar etraflı bir şekilde ve örneklerle sunulacak, isrâiliyâtın bu kültürler arasında bilgi akımını ve intikalini sağlayan bir köprü görevi gördüğü/görebileceği hususu üzerinde durulacaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** isrâiliyât, isrâiloğulları, İslam kültürü, diğer kültürler, bilgi intikali, kültürlerarası köprü

## DEFINITION OF ISRA'ILİYAT AND TRANSFER TO THE ISLAMIC CULTURE\*

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the meaning of the word 'Israel' is a prerequisite to sense the term isra'iliyat. According to the Holy Torah, the word 'Israel' is the name of the prophet Jacob (Torah, Genesis, 32/28). Islamic literature confirms that Israel is the name of the prophet Jacob and therefore Jewish people are called 'The Israelites' (See al-Dhahabi, 1411/1990: 13; Wensinck, 1965: V/II/1128; Aydemir, no date: 6). In the Holy Koran, frequently addressed "hey Israelites" represents the Jewish people (See Qoran, 2/40, 47, 83, 122, 211; 5/78; 17/4; 27/76. Also see Rubin, 2002: II/575). According to the Holy Torah, Israel stands for a person who is concerned about Allah or a person Allah is concerned about (Torah, Genesis, 32/28). According to the Islamic sources, on the other hand, (Isra) stands for (man) and (el) for (Allah), accordingly, (Israel) means (Allah's vassal) (al-Tabari, 1422/2001: I/593; Na'nae, 1390/1970: 71-72; Abu Shahba, 1408: 12; Ogmus, 2010: 183). Consequently, Isra'iliyat is a notion about Jewish people (Na'nae, 1390/1970: 71).

Islamic sources briefly define the term isra'iliyat as a parable, information or an incident quoted from an Israeli source (See Vajda, 1978: IV/211-212; Leaman, 2006a: 322; Leaman, 2006b: 64-65). Yet in a broader definition of the term, any parable, myth, tradition or any other kind of information present in Islam and especially Tafsir (exegesis of Koran) from Jewish, Christian, Persian, Indian, Chinese and all other religions and cultures are called isra'iliyat (al-Dhahabi, 1411/1990: 13-14; Bernstein, 2006: 9). Since these items mainly come from the Israelites, the term entitled so (al-Dhahabi, no date: I/121). We can briefly say that any

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religious information originated from an outer source but not Islam (For mor information see Na'nae, 1390/1970: 72-73; Newby, 1979: 686).

Although these information can be correct, they can also be incorrect or even fiction. Therefore Islamic scholars warn about being critical about Isra'iliyat.

### **ISLAMIC STANCE AGAINST ISRA'ILYAT**

In the Holy Koran, principal book of Islam, by saying 'if you do not bear knowledge on a subject, you may learn from one who knows (ahl al-dhikr)', it is specified that some unknown matters could be inquired to the Israelites. Some Islamic scholars commented that it is polytheists who are addressed in these verses of the Holy Koran. They stated that those polytheists who deny prophets being human beings are ordered to inquire Jewish people who would know about this (See Abu Zahra, no date: VIII/4123; al-Zuhayli, no date: I/273, 323; al-Ghazali, 1420/2000: 209). According to this, Muslims are not allowed to do so. However, it is possible to take this statement broader. Thus, unknown issues could be learned from the ones who know about it. Yet if Muslims are lack of information on a subject, they can inquire about it to Jewish, Christian or any other religious or cultural scholars who might bear knowledge on that subject. This is a universal principle for dissemination of knowledge and the Holy Koran underlines this fact. Here we should emphasize the declaration referred to Prophet Mohammed which says 'even if the wisdom is far in China, you should go and receive it'. Although this hadith is claimed to be untrue (See al-Bazzar, 1988-2009: I/164; al-Dhahabi, 1382/1963: I/107; al-Albani, 1412/1992: I/600), it's meaning is very relevant with the understanding of Islam towards knowledge. Though in Islam, religion, language, origin of the knowledge, or gender, age or race of the bearer of the knowledge is of no importance, but if it is useful or not. Hz. Mohammed always favored useful lore and avoided and advised people to avoid from unuseful lore (Ibn Maja, 1401/1981: Kitab al-Dua, 3, Kitab Iqamah al-Salah, 32). As a consequence, useful knowledge for human being should be acquired even if it is as far as China which is then the furthest country known to the Muslims.

On the other hand, in various verses, in cases of disagreements between Jewish and Muslims, they are requested to consult to Torah (See Qoran, 3/93). Also, Allah suggests the Prophet Mohammed to consult to those Jewish and Christians who were previous readers of holy books if he hesitates in any of the revelations (See Qoran, 11/94). It was this mentality tolerated Isra'iliyat and transferred items from it.

There is use to point out that Holy Koran requires Muslims to be very careful while transferring items from Jewish since there are falsified parts in the Holy book of Torah especially on subjects like faith. Nevertheless, regarding Torah, Psalms and Gospel as true scriptures and some praising words about Jewish and Christians in Koran forced Muslims to set relations with them in these aspects. As such, many subjects concisely accounted in Koran are explained in extenso in Torah or had been known in detail by Jewish (For some comparisons see Ibrahim, 2003: 7-219). Some inquisitive Muslims needed to consult and learn thoroughly about these issues which are only briefly explained by the Koran by asking about them to Jewish people they encounter (See al-Dhahabi, 1411/1990: 22).

On the other hand, attitudes of the prophet of Muslims, Mohammed bear great importance here (See al-Dhahabi, 1411/1990: 41-43; Hamidullah, 1977: 296-301; Karacabey,

2003: 73-90). He warned Muslims against falsified and fiction items of Jewish (See al-Bukhari, 1401/1981: al-I'tisam, 25, al-Tafseer, 11, al-Tawhid, 51) and he requested Muslims not to acquire any of such information (See al-Bukhari, 1401/1981: al-I'tisam, 25, al-Tawhid, 42). However indicating that some true information could be received from these sources, he noted that there is no objection for learning from these sources (See al-Bukhari, 1401/1981: al-Anbiya, 50; Abu Dawud, 1401/1981: al-Ilm, 11). Two items mentioned in some sources indicates that he was quite permissive on this issue. In one of these items, one night Abdullah b. Amr b. As sees in his dream butter leaking out from one of his fingers and honey from another and he is licking them both. When he tells about this dream to Prophet Mohammed, he told him 'you will read both books, Koran and Torah. Indeed, he read both scriptures and made great use of both, transferred many items (See Ahmed b. Hanbel, 1421/2001: XI/638). Another item mentions Prophet Mohammed saying to Abdullah b. Selam who converted to Islam from Judaism, 'read Koran one day and Torah the other' (al-Dhahabi, 1419/1998: I/26).

Resulting from above mentioned points and the fact that they had been living together for a long time, Muslims and Jewish often interacted by meetings, conversations, discussions. Many sahabah were consulting Jewish scholars from time to time on the issues they were curious about (Ibn Khaldun, 2005: II/365; al-Dhahabi, 2002: 164-165; Albayrak, 2001: 72-78). Although those Jewish people sometimes answered truthfully, they often gave falsified and fictitious information to Muslims' questions (See Abu Rayya, no date: 118-120; Ozdemir, 2008: 208-222).

Considering all these points, Muslim scholars evaluated the isra'iliyat for conformity to the Islam/Koran, and stated that if an item is appropriate with verses of the Koran and principals of the Islam or if neither suitable nor discrepant to the Islam, Muslims are allowed take them and use, if against Islam and Koran, Muslims must avoid them (al-Dhabai, no date: I/130-131; al-Dhabai, 1411/1990: 36-37; Na'nae, 1390/1970: 76-85; Aydemir, no date: 7-18; Ozdemir, 2008: 308-312).

### **ISRA'ILİYAT, A RİVER THROUGH ISLAM**

Within the above mentioned boundaries, we witness especially the early Muslim scholars took these items and included them in their works (See Ridell-Street, 1997: 68; Berkey, 2003: 96). In this context, we see especially sahabahs like Abdullah b. Amr b. As (d. 65/684), Abdullah b. Omar (d. 74/693), Abdullah b. Abbas (d. 68/687) and following leading personalities like Mujahid (d. 104/722), Ikrima (d. 105/723), Qatade (d. 117/735), Dahhaq (d. 105/723), Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728) and following these personalities, scholars like Muqatil b. Sulaiman (d. 150/767), Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/920) including Isra'iliyat in their works and help disseminate them. These Muslim scholars were generally consulting to Jewish and Christian scholars they trust in knowledge and credibility, and they were trying to understand the parts in Koran with the knowledge they gained from those Jewish and Christians. Especially some personalities converted to Islam from Judaism like Abdullah b. Salam (d. 43/663), Ka'b al-Akhbar (d. 32/652), Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) contributed many Isra'iliyat to those Muslim scholars (See al-Dhabai, no date: I/123-129; al-Dhabai, 1411/1990:

16-17; Emin, no date: II/139; al-Kawthari, 2004: 221-225; Leaman, 2006b: 322; Lewis, 1984: 97; Watt, 1991: 43; Atmaca, 1996: 368-371).

So to speak, Israeli items flowed into the Muslim lands like a river and mixed with the native ones there, triggering new crops to grow mixing with the water there. This also created a link, a contraction, an information bridge between Islamic culture and others, Judaism being the leading. All these knowledge, rumors, stories spread among the Muslims with the help of this bridge. With all this, Muslims could gain more knowledge than they actually could. They had the chance to better understand the verses in their holy book which were mentioning on the previous civilizations and prophets. Tafsirs afterwards became richer, more colorful and inclusive. By this, Muslims had the chance to get to know about other cultures and religions closer and in more detail. People from different cultures and religions got to know better about each other. Knowledge based connections and cultural bridges established in between. This is the point we desire to emphasize here.

This new idea represented such a great importance to Muslims that, subsequent Caliphates such as Ma'mun (d. 218/833), and Mu'tasim (d. 227/842), opened special translation institutions in order to bring in the knowledge which belongs to other cultures and religions to Islamic world and for use of Muslims. In these institutions, many Hellenic items, works of important Greek Philosophers translated into Arabic, together with Jewish cultural items. Other than these, many Persian, Indian, Chinese and other civilizations' works too were translated into Arabic by these institutions (See Kaya, 1992: 88-91).

In this way, transferring that much information from different cultures to Islam with the highest efficiency became available with these institutions. From then on, all the Muslim scholars were able to broaden their knowledge with these transferred knowledge and create their own in the light of them. Known to the world along with the Islamic population, scholars like al-Farabi (v. 339/950), Avenenna (Ibn Sina) (v. 428/1037), al-Ghazali (v. 505/1111), Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (v. 595/1198) were all fed by these transferred literature.

Here, we considered all the translated literature of other cultures as *isra'iliyat*. Actually the work of translation then was a kind of *isra'iliyat*. Just like with *isra'iliyat*, meaning of these actions were eventually the transfer of knowledge, news and rumors from other cultures. Although *isra'iliyat* were mainly composed of verbal transfer of items, translations were of written origin.

### REVERSE FLOW

Flowing through the land of Islam for quite a long time, river of *Isra'iliyat* inspired many Muslim scholars and resulted in the accumulation of a huge body of knowledge and rumor. Muslim scholars took the items from Jewish, Christian, Greek, Persian, Indian and other cultures and melted them in their own pot, re-identified them and so to say Islamized them. Therewithal, they made great additions, contributions to them. They made it richer. Afterwards, this enriched and Islamized body of knowledge started to flow towards other soils, especially towards west. Its transfer to the west happened by various Western scholars, scientists, researchers, merchants and others interacting with Muslims (For some examples see Hunke, no date: 25-461; Gurkan, no date: 217-320). Andalusia being primary, pupil from different academies of the region accelerated and systematized this transfer of knowledge. The body of knowledge which was Islamized found itself a new base to flow to

come into life again and flourish across this new soil. This was so to speak, reverse flow of water. Now the water was flowing in the reverse direction, but stronger and more robust than ever before. Many works of Muslim scholars were translated into different languages and Latin, which was the language of religion, science and culture of the west. These books were being treated as textbooks in schools and important researches were made on them. With the help of these books, the Renaissance in the west started, or, to say, got stronger with the inspiration from the incoming new knowledge and ideas (Gurkan, no date: 219-220). But, of course additions and contributions of the West on these items and knowledge at least as much as Muslims did must be acknowledged. Especially in the last few centuries, science, art and culture in the west progressed a distance as much as from Moon to Mars. Progress in Medicine, Engineering, Physics, Chemistry and other branches of science was not any lesser than the progress in Astronomy. In today's world, mapping out the genes of living beings including humans, detection of the genes and cloning them are not impossible. Moreover, all these sciences globalized and became effective all over the world which has roots not only of Jewish, Christian and Muslim origin, but also of Greek, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian and others origin. So it started to belong to not only a nation or a culture, but to everyone.

#### **DETERIORATING VALUTE: ISRA'ILİYAT**

There were reliable items along with treacherous information transferred as isra'iliyat from representatives of Jewish and other cultures (For some examples see Karacabey, 2003: 90-98). Passion of learning more about issues which are only mentioned but not deeply explained in Koran drifted some Muslims to retrieve any kind of knowledge on that subject. While doing so, they disregarded the criteria of being critical which was set by the previous scholars on transferring these items. Without properly inspecting conformity with Islam and Koran, every item encountered were retrieved and included in various books along with tafsir books. Some of these items attributed to Prophet Mohammed as if hadith. As a consequence, because of such isra'iliyat, some verses in Koran were deflected from their real meanings (Akdemir, 2003: 71). For instance, two angels sent down to earth, named Harut and Marut fell in love with a beautiful Persian woman named Zuhrah and desired to be with her. However, the woman said that she would never be with them unless they reveal the incantation for ascension and fall. Hence, they revealed the invocation they practice to fall on earth and reascension. The woman immediately repeats the prayer and ascends. However she forgot the words to fall back to earth and stays there ascended. Finally Allah turns her into a star and she stays in the sky (al-Tabari, 1422/2001: I/345, 347-348). This untruthful information spread between Muslims, took extensive place in tafsirs and it was believed that she became a star in the sky. Even, it is narrated that Abdullah bin Omer knew that star and when he saw it evenings, he used to curse it saying 'that's the star fooled Harut and Marut' (al-Tabari, 1422/2001: II/345, 347-348; Ibn Katheer, 1420/1999: I/354). Many other rumors can be found in our tafsir books (See Aydemir, no date: 73-316; Yasdiman, 2011: 38-59). Thence, real meanings of some verses deflected from their real meanings because of these untruthful rumors.

Together with all this, some Jewish showed special effort to spread falsified rumors between Muslims to create strife between them and deviate their beliefs. Allah talking to

vassals as if a human being (See Torah, 32/24-32), Adam and Eve's polytheism (See Akdemir, 2003: 75-79), immoral behaviours of prophets (See Torah, 9/21-24; 12/11-20; 19/30-38; 20/1-7, 11-12; 26/7-11; 27/1-38), distribution of evil by angels among humans (See al-Tabari, 1422/2001: II/341-349) are some examples of narratives which are noncompliance with Islamic belief (See Yargici, 2006: 64). In fact, these concealed thoughts became only representatives of *isra'iliyat*.

Here we will content with mentioning only to prophet David on this issue. One day prophet David saw a beautiful woman bathing and he fell in love with her and desired to marry her. However the woman was married to a man named Uriya. Prophet David sent this man named Uriya to the ongoing war and ordered the commander of the army to make him fight in the very first row. The commander does so. Finally Uriya dies in the battle. Prophet David learning this, marries the woman although he had 99 wives. Prophet Solomon is a child of this woman (See al-Baghawi, 1412: VII/78-79; al-Tha'labi, 1422/2002: VIII/185-186).

This incident is mentioned in the holy bible as well. According to Bible, one night when he was on the roof of his house, King David saw a woman bathing. The woman was pretty and beautiful. David immediately sent his men and learned about the woman. The woman is the wife of a man called Hitti Uriya and named Bat-Sheba. David brought the woman to his house and slept with her. The woman got pregnant and told David about this. To gain Bat-Sheba, David gave a letter to her husband Hitti Uriya and sent him to Yoab, the commander of an ongoing war. In the letter David ordered the commander to make Hitti Uriya fight on the frontier alone when the battle is at the peak and Uriya died as a result. Thereupon, David married the woman (II. Samuel, 11/2-27).

About other prophets, too, there are many unacceptable and indecent stories and rumors for Muslims (For some examples see Conkor, 2008: 48-124; Yilmaz, 2001: 71-87). Rumors about Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and other prophets are of this kind. Because of these falsified and untruthful items, matter of *isra'iliyat*, which could have served as a bridge between cultures, connect different worlds and subserve to humanity, failed to do so and Muslim scholars who detected such wantonness discredited this and tried to make Muslims stay away from *isra'iliyat*. Even, in many sources, Muslims required to avoid from *isra'iliyat* since they are disseminated between Muslims deliberately and in a hostile way (See al-Dhabai, 1411/1990: 13-15, 26-29; Aydemir, no date: 51-52; Taji-Faruqi-Basheer, 2004: 325-326). Together with these, many Muslim commentators criticized those *isra'iliyat* and kept people away from them (See Na'nae, 1390/1970: 98-105; Ergun, 2006: 72-83).

#### **TRANSFER OF ISRA'ILYAT TO THE OTTOMANS AND ISTA'ILYAT IN THE OTTOMAN FOLK CULTURE**

Ottoman Empire is a state, established by the Kayi tribe which was created after the collapse of the Seljuq Empire in Anatolia. In 1453, 150 years after its foundation, made a remarkable progress in the history of world by capturing Istanbul which was then a Byzantine city. Its golden age was between 1520 and 1566, during the 46 year Kanuni Sultan Sulaiman epoch. In 1923, after 600 years of sovereignty, Ottoman Empire was virtually and officially ended with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey.

Ottoman citizens were religious people living mainly in Anatolia. Their religious culture was formed by the information found in 10 main sources. *Isra'iliyat* among the



Ottoman folk culture had consisted of the information from these sources. List of these books, which created the Ottoman religious culture were as follows with the chronological order.

- 1 - *Muhammadiyah*: Yazicioglu Mehmed Bican (d. 857/1453);
- 2 - *Anvar al-Ashikeen*: Yazicioglu Ahmed Bican (d. 870/1466);
- 3 - *Muzakki'n-Nufus*: Ashrafoglu Rumi (d. 874/1470);
- 4 - *Kara Davud*: Kara Davud b. Kamal (d. 948/1541);
- 5 - *al-Tariqat al-Muhammadiyah*: Balikesirli Mehmed b. Pir Birgivi (d. 981/1573);
- 6 - *Mizrakli Ilmihal*: (Anonim or Mizrakli Efendi (d. XVI-XVII. century);
- 7 - *Ahmadiyah*: Diyarbekirli Ahmed Murshidi Efendi (d. 1174/1761);
- 8 - *Marifetname*: Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakki (d. 1194/1780);
- 9 - *Sharh-i Vasiyyet al-Muhammadiyah*: Kadizade Ahmed b. Muhammed Emin Islamboli (d. 1197/1783) (Arpagus, 2006: 26-52).

In addition to these, there are other sources written outside the Ottoman soil but gained favor among people, *Tenbih al-Gafilin* (1) being the major. The book is written by Abu al-Layth al-Semerandi (d. 375/978), who was also a well-known commentator and a scribe.

Another piece is named *Sherhu Shir'at al-Islam* (2). The original work *Shir'atu'l-Islam*, was created by Muhammed b. Ebibekir (d. 573/1177) and expounded by an Ottoman scholar Yakup b. Seyyid Alizade (d. 931/1525).

*Imad al-Islam* (3), is a work to be mentioned here. This book is actually a translation of the work of Abdulaziz Farisi (d. Islamic calendar VIII/Gregorian calendar XV scholar). In this book, there are items absent in the original piece. Later this book was organized by Abdurrahman b. Yusuf Aksarayi (v. after 950/1544).

Another such an important work is *Delail al-Hayat* (4) written by Abdullah Muhammed b. Süleyman el-Cezuli (v. 870/1466). This work is so widespread that almost in all homes there was one (Arpagus, 2006: 39-50).

These 13 important books were very popular among literate people and were discussed between them and read to ordinary people on important days in communal areas. They were read after en masse Friday-prayers and were commented in lodges and hospices. Also they were read when there was a meeting with different reasons (Arpagus, 2006: 66-76).

Transfer of items from other cultures to Ottoman culture actualized with these above mentioned books. And these books quoted isra'iliyat mainly from Tafsir, Hadith and Mystic books. Thence anyone reading or listening homily on these were learning about them and disseminating them by telling others. Since items of isra'iliyat were of story, fable, legend a myth type, they attracted more attention from people and became more permanent in minds. And this was another reason for them to be successfully disseminated.

Let us mention broader on some widespread Israeli items in the Ottoman culture. However, before that, we must note that while some of these items, which are widely accepted among Ottomans were related with the procreation of universe, earth, humans and all other creatures, some were about the Prophet Mohammed and other Prophets. Knowledge about portents of doomsday, afterlife, angels, jinn, devil and issues like destiny, incidents, sustenance, mitzvah, sin were among effective Israeli items in Ottoman culture (Arpagus, 2006: 135-438).

Especially after Yunus Emre (v. 728/1328) mentioning in his poems, the idea of presence of 18 thousand universes became popular. In one of his poem divines, while he was describing Prophet Mohammed, he introduced him as eminent of 18 thousand universes. This mentality is adopted among Ottomans as it is. The idea of 18 thousand universes is non-existent in the Koran and valid Sunnah but is transferred to the Islamic culture as an Israeli item. There are other numbers mentioned on this topic. However, one of the Israeli item transferor Vehb b. Münebbih (v. 110/728) transferred an item saying 'Allah created 18 thousand universes and earth is just one of them' (al-Semerkandi, 1413/1993: I/80; al-Qurtubi, 1427/2006: I/214; al-Bursawi, no date: I/13). Here the information he gave transferred exactly to the Islamic literature and Ottomans believed it so. Nevertheless, although plural form of universe is mentioned in the Koran, there is no evidence of the number 18 thousand.

Description of the universe among Ottomans were shaped with an Israeli item and it was as follows: Welkin has 36.000 feet, every feet has 360.000 universes, every universe has 360.000 squares and every square has 360.000 cities, and in every city only the God knows the number of different creatures (Arpagus, 2006: 145). There is no such information the Koran on this issue.

Another story making up the Ottoman religious culture says that Allah created some creatures to hold the earth still and one of these says that Allah created an ox with forty thousand horns and the distance between its legs is five hundred years and the earth is standing on its back (See Yazicioglu, Muhammadiyye, 1300: 30-32; Yazicioglu, 1306: 18-19; Ibrahim Hakki, no date: 16; Arpagus, 2006: 154-155. compare al-Semerkandi, 1413/1993: II/336; al-Bursawi, no date: V/366, X/101). This understanding found itself such a prevalence that many people believed that the earth is resting on back of an ox. Yet it is believed that earthquakes happen when the ox is tired and moving the earth to the other side of its back (See Boratav, 1973: 14; Bayrı, 1972: 134; Elcin, 1993: 327-328; Arpagus, 2006: 154-155).

Different colors of people in the Ottoman folk culture is explained as follows and in many Tafsir books it is mentioned as an Israeli item: when Allah decided to create humans, sends the angel Gabriel down to earth to collect the soil he will create the human being. Meanwhile the devil comes by and convinces the earth not to hand out the soil to Gabriel. Earth begs Gabriel not to take any soil saying 'Human being out of my soil will revolt against Allah and what will I say to Allah then?' and Gabriel returns without collecting the soil. Afterwards, Allah sends angel Michael to collect the soil but Michael too returns empty-handed. Upon this, Allah sends Azrael down to earth and Azrael never minds what the earth says replying 'Orders of the Lord are much more important than your beggings' and returns to Allah with different colours and compositions of soil. Thereupon, Allah creates the first mankind mixing these different colours and compositions of soil. Here is the reason why people are with different colours and personalities (Yazicizade 1300: 36-39; Yazicizade, 1306:

26-27; Arpagus, 2006: 159-160. Compare al-Semerandi, 1413/1993: I/108; Ibn Adil, 1419/1998: VIII/15; al-Suyuti, 1424/2003: I/251-252; al-Bursawi, no date: I/41, 99). Although there are such information in some Hadiths, there is no such information in Koran.

On the creature of mother Eve, understanding of many Ottomans were shaped with an Israeli item which is mentioned in Tafsir books as well: After creating Adam, Allah gave a long sleep to him. While he was asleep, Allah took one of his ribs out and refilled with flesh and created Eve from that bone. When Adam wakes up, he saw Eve and since she was created from a part of his body, he immediately warms up to her (See Yazicizade 1300: 47-48; Yazicizade, 1306: 30-31; Arpagus, 2006: 163. Kars. Abu'l-Layth al-Semerandi, Tafseeru Ebi'l-Layth al-Semerandi, I/328; Compore al-Baghawi, 1412: I/82; al-Suyuti, 1424/2003: IV/209). We must remind that this point exactly the same in Holy Bible (Torah, Genesis, 2/21-24). Koran says that wife of the first man is created from himself (See Quran, en-Nisa, 4/1). Although many of the explicators advocate that this means mother Eve was created from Adams body, some opposed that idea and interpreted the verse as ' Adam and Eve both created from the same soil both being humans' (See al-Isfahânî, no date: 96; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1404/1984/II/1; al-Râzî, 1401/1981/IX/166-167, XV/93/XXV/111). All other detailed information are non-existent in the Koran.

Menstruation of woman and delivering babies with great pains were believed in the Ottoman folk culture to be because of the Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the heaven and made Adam eat it. According to this, Allah placed Adam and Eve to heaven and freed them to eat anything but just one fruit. However, devil came to Eve and convinced her to eat that fruit saying that she could be eternal and Eve ate that fruit and made Adam to eat too. Thereupon Allah was angry to them and punished them. As a punishment Allah made Adam to cultivate the land to earn his livelihood and Eve to have a period every month and deliver her babies with great pain and made snake to crawl which let the devil in to the heaven (See Yazicizade, 1300: 49-56; Yazicizade, 1306: 31-36; Arpagus, 2006: 163-165. Compare Al-Tha'labi, 1422/2002: IV/225; al-Baghawi, 1412: I/83-84). This incident too is exactly in the Holy Bible (Torah, Genesis, 3/1-19). Koran on the other hand mentions menstruation as an illness of the body and forbids sexual intercourse with women during this period (See Quran, 2/222) and never mentions the rest of the story.

Understandings like the Prophet Mohammed is the first human being created and the reason for being created (See Arpagus, 2006: 179-185) is found exactly the same in the Christianity for Jesus and it is asserted that this understanding of Muslims is affected by the Christian belief (See Nicholson, 1978: 70; Arpagus, 2006: 185).

Understanding of antichrist is common in almost all religions. In Islamic sources too, the issue is broadly mentioned. In religious sources of Ottoman folk culture, Dajjal is broadly explained as prisoned on an island by Gabriel and close to the doomsday it will re-appear and seize the whole world except for Makkah and Madina and will bind many people to itself, squint eyed and written kafir on its forehead etc. and people believed these so. Also, it is explained to people how to get protected from Dajjal, like reading the vessel Kehif in the Koran (See Yazicizade, 1300: 248-249; Arpagus, 2006: 268-270). When we examine apocalyptic works, we see that such information transferred to Islamic literature and to

Ottoman culture is found in sources of other religions as well. Similar descriptions are present in other sources too (See Pacaci, 1998: 46-47; Demirci, 1994: IX/67-68; Saritoprak, 1995: 124; Biyik, 2007: 53-65). Such issues never mentioned in Koran (Saritoprak, 1995: 125-126) are obviously transferred to Islamic sources and Ottoman culture as Israeli items (See Arpagus, 2006: 270-272).

There are many such subjects transferred from other religions to Islamic literature and to Ottoman folk culture and became a matter of religious beliefs (See Arpagus, 2006: 288-438.). Beliefs like Jesus' descent from heaven, Gog and Magog, beast of the last days, sun rising from the west are some examples of this (Arpagus, 2006: 272-288). Nevertheless, we will confine ourselves with mentioning just a little part of these here.

### CONCLUSION

It is obvious from what we have mentioned so far that *isra'iliyat* had widely been in the Muslim literature, especially in the early era and draw attention and prevalence among Muslims. Since *isra'iliyat* included items of parable, they grabbed interest among people and explicated to many in places like mosques and house meetings. Lack of extensive information in Koran on some topics and presence of broad explanation of these topics in Israeli cultural elements compelled Muslims to such Israeli news and items.

In this way, Israeli items which were popular during the early era discredited and recommended to be avoided because they contain wantonness, cover up the fundamental purposes of the Koran by historical rumors and opposing to some Islamic mentalities and possible side effects to the religious principals of Islam. Together with this, they are still credited in some rumor tafsirs, sources of hadith and Sufi.

Although it is generally a verbal transfer of items, we sometimes witness written transfers as well. Especially during Abbasid era, when translation activities to Arabic fostered, we see that transfer of many items from other cultures to Islamic culture grounded. Muslims made great use of these items, made additions on them from themselves and made them richer. Afterwards, we witness these items transferred to the western culture, especially to Europe and they got even richer there and made great progress.

Although *isra'iliyat* mainly consisted of religious items, we know that there are moral, philosophical and even astronomical knowledge in it. With all these aspects, *isra'iliyat* could contribute and should have contributed to the history of humanity and culture of the world. Unfortunately, because of various wantonness and righteous criticisms against it, *isra'iliyat* could not perform such a function.

We believe that the positive side of the *isra'iliyat* which makes up a great proportion of the sources of Muslims should also be considered. We can consider Israeli items which are not against the fundamentals of Islam and not undermining the religious beliefs as cultural richness. These can be adopted as literary values or a type of religious literature. We know that the Ottoman literature got richer, tastier, differentiated and colorated with some Israeli items and rumors. We can say that literary productions of Mavlana, Yunus Emre, Haji Bektash, Haji Bayram Veli, Pir Sultan Abdal and many other Muslim scholars are highly inclusive of Israeli items. All these are richness and fineness of literature. Some Israeli items made the Ottoman literature richer, as they made the religious culture richer too.

Today, owing to israiliyat, we know many information, parables and rumors about Israelis. Owing to israiliyat, many cultural items became known to Muslims. Not only became familiar to Muslims, but also included in their literature, culture and made important contributions to the creation of Muslims' religious culture. Some items of Muslims passed into some other cultures in the region. Here we consider not only items entered into the Islamic literature from other cultures as isra'iliyat, but also items transferred into other cultures from Islamic culture. As such, we have explained this under the headline 'Reverse flow'. With this side isra'iliyat served as a bridge between cultures, a means for transferring items from culture to culture.

We Middle Eastern and Anatolian Muslims unfortunately lack of enough information on Chinese and Indian cultures. It is just as difficult to say that items of Islamic culture are transferred into the Far Eastern cultures. Between our culture and theirs, there is no such mixture or interaction as happened between Israelis and Muslims. Yet isra'iliyat, which we consider as a means for bridge between cultures could not function properly between Islamic and Far Eastern cultures and failed to set such a cultural bridge between these cultures. Nevertheless, if we were able to set such a cultural bridge between Far Eastern cultures and Islamic culture as set between Israelis and Muslims, then we could get to know about Eastern culture better and they could get to know about us better. This intercourse would probably make us closer. If there are not good relations between Israel and Muslim states, the only reason behind it is political disagreements, not religious points of views. If there were not any political disagreements between the state of Israel and Muslim states probably these two religions' followers would probably be much closer owing to the isra'iliyat bridge existing for long. Nevertheless, political approaches obstacle such good relations.

In an environment where even a little spark can cause conflicts on world peace isra'iliyat which is expected to be a means for a bridge between cultures is desperately needed for the peace around the world.

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