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Heavenly Warfare in the Qurʾān

In my contribution to the Livit conference I will focus not on earthly but on heavenly violence. The Quran refers to *shayāṭīn* and *jinn* who try to sneak into heaven where they might hear something of the conversation between God and His angelic council. Accordingly God has arranged towers (*burūj*; Q 15:16), presumably stars, to guard heaven, and He chases away those *shayāṭīn* or *jinn* who come close with a *shihāb* (“comet, firebrand” cf. Q 15.18; 72.9). These images bespeak a cosmology where God resides in a heaven that exists in the same realm as this world, but on the other side of a barrier penetrable only by the angels (through certain pathways [*asbāb*]; Q 18.84; 40:36) . Moreover it reflects the Qurʾānic story of Adam, Even, and Satan, who were sent *down* from a heavenly garden to the world below.

After introducing this cosmological image, I will discuss how Muslim exegetes used this cosmology to present God as a warrior who fights against the enemies of Islam. I will argue, however, that the Qurʾān uses this cosmology above all to illustrate the privileged knowledge of its prophet.