

The Muslim Sunrise

Spring • 2007
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"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)

The Islamic Perspective On God's Prophets:

A Rejoinder to U.S. News & World Report



Mount Sinai is located in the Sinai Peninsula, which lies between Egypt and Palestine.

8 Prophets of God:
The Islamic
Perspective
Holy Qurán on
Prophethood

30 Jesus,
the Son of Mary
Myths and
Misconceptions
About Jesus

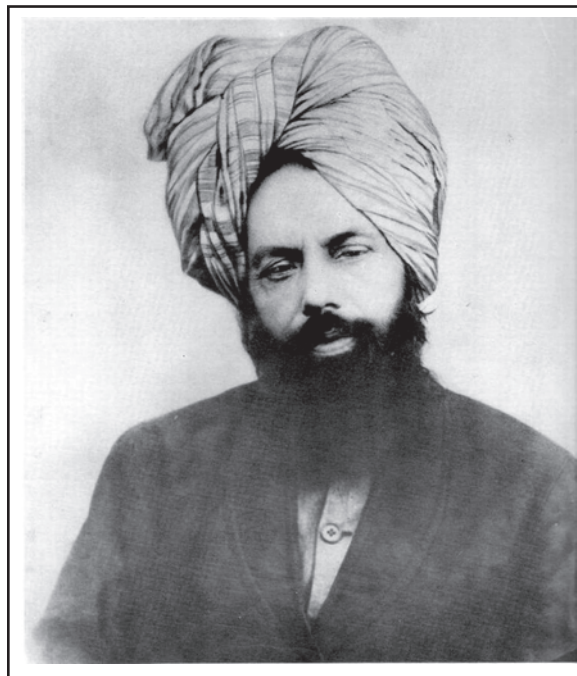
37 The Holy
Prophet of Islam
The "Seal of the
Prophets" Born in a
World of Chaos



The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 178 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *Alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad *Sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *Radhi-Allaho anho* or 'may Allah be pleased with him.' While such salutations have been abbreviated in the text for readability (as, sa & ra respectively), we encourage all Muslims to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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In This Issue

Features

8 Prophets of God: The Islamic Perspective

The Holy Qur'an declares that every nation has had a prophet.

10 Adam: Created or Evolved

How Islam reconciles the "creation of Adam" with the theory of evolution.

14 Abraham's Sacrifice: The Rest of the Story

Muslim perspective in light of historical facts, scriptural evidence, and overall significance.

21 Moses: Unmasked, or Maligned?

Allâh absolved the Israelite Prophet of the slander against him.

30 Jesus the Son of Mary

Some major myths and misconceptions clarified by the Holy Qurán.

33 Jesus in India

An escape from death and a journey to India.

37 The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

The "Seal of the Prophets," who was born in a world of chaos. His history illustrated through facts and the Holy Qurán.

40 The Second Coming of the Messiah

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days.



Spring 2007 - Volume 87, Issue 1

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he had the honor of founding the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands as the first and longest running Muslim



Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq

publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective

Departments

4 Passage from the Holy Qur'an

5 Editorial

6 Promised Messiah: Prophets Demonstrate God's Existence.

7 Khalifatul Masih's Friday Sermon: The Perfect Man, The Holy Prophet Muhammad.^{saw} The most perfect man came with Allah's full blessings and revived a dead world.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
أُولُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا
فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

Mankind were one community, then they differed among themselves, so Allah raised **Prophets** as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and sent down with them the book containing the truth that He might judge between the people wherein they differed. But then they began to differ about the Book, and none differed about it except those to whom it was given, after clear Signs had come to them, out of envy towards one another. Now has Allah, by His command, guided the believers to the truth in regard to which they (the unbelievers) differed; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the right path.

Surah Al-Baqarah Verse : 214

Editorial

We have dedicated this issue of the *Muslim Sunrise* to the subject of Prophets. *U.S. News & World Report* recently published a special edition entitled, “Mysteries of Faith – The Prophets,” in which the personalities and characters of various prophets were described. Their description of prophets was not in accordance with the understanding of Muslims’ beliefs, which is based on the Holy Qur’an. Certain remarks, such as David^{as} being a playboy and Moses^{as} a ruthless killer, amount to blasphemy in Islamic view.

The above referenced edition seems to emphasize the function of the prophets as fortunetellers. The idea that prophets of God were merely people who prophesized about the future is an understatement of their purpose. They are much more than that. Islam has a very distinct and unique view of the prophets, their purpose, and their value in the human history.

We have tried here to explain the general purpose of prophets and how they accomplish their goals. We illustrate how they exhibited their true

character and standard of morality, serving as models for their people. In this issue we also discuss the position of Islam in reference to the various prophets of God such as Abraham^{as}, Moses^{as}, David^{as} and Solomon^{as}.

The Holy Qur’an very specifically describes the function of the prophets, stating that prophets were sent to all parts of the world. The Qur’an further states it has described some of them by name, but it does not mean that they were the only prophets sent by God. (According to one tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, there were 124,000 prophets sent by God). It also commands all Muslims to affirm that one God sent all the prophets. It is not a matter of courtesy but a matter of faith and belief.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community also believes in the fulfillment of the second coming of the Messiah through the advent of Hadhrat Ahmad^{as}, its founder. As such, we have described his mission and purpose. Another unique discussion we present here is the life of Jesus^{as} son of Mary *after* the incidence of the cross; his travels and his final resting place. Although Mary^{ra} mother of Jesus is not considered a prophet, we have included her in this issue so our Chris-

tian friends can learn the Islamic view concerning her image and character.

We hope this issue will inspire more discussion and further interest in the lives of the prophets who came to establish the worship of one God. We encourage comments and dialogue from all interested in a constructive debate to bring mankind towards one God – for which all the prophets worked so hard.

Letter to the Editor:

I perused a copy of Muslim Sunrise, Winter 2006, in our local library and was delighted by the editorial. To love “God with all of our heart..” was the most important commandment according to Jesus (praise His precious name). How good it is to see a Muslim group such as yours promoting peace and brotherly love.

As a follower of Jesus Christ (non-denominational) I grieve over the Muslim on Muslim violence-not only in Iraq but in so many middle Eastern areas. The carnage of innocent men, women, and children by the senseless suicide bombings is beyond reason.

Since you refer to your group as “Muslim Missionaries”, I wonder if your activities should be directed to the Middle East with the message of brotherly love by the power of God. As mentioned in another article, Christians are not allowed to take that message to many of these countries.

Roger A. Keech,
Prof. Emeritus

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The Promised Messiah

Prophets Demonstrate God's Existence

It should be remembered that it is the Prophets (peace be on them) who demonstrate the existence of God and teach people His Unity. If those holy ones had not appeared, it would have been impossible to discover the straight path with certainty. Though a person of sincere nature, possessing sane reason can, by reflecting on the universe and observing its perfect and well-established order, conclude that there ought to be a Creator of this well-ordered universe, however, there is a world of difference between 'Ought to be' and 'Is'.

The Prophets alone (peace be on them) established through thousands of signs and miracles that the Transcendent Being Who comprises all power does in fact exist. Indeed, the degree of comprehension that the need of a Creator may be perceived by the observation of the universe is also a reflection of the rays of Prophethood.

If there were no Prophets, no one would have achieved this degree of reason. This may be understood through the contemplation that,



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

As the recognition of God always depends upon the recognition of a Prophet, it is not possible to recognize the Unity of God without him.

though there is water below the surface of the earth, the maintenance of that water depends upon the water that descends from the sky.

When there is a long drought, the underground water dries up and when rain descends the underground water also begins to well up.

In the same way, with the advent of a Prophet, reason—which is sub-surface water—is sharpened and improved; and when over a long period no Prophet is

raised the sub-surface water of reason begins to decline and becomes muddled and the worship of idols and all manner of paganism and vice abound. The eye possesses the faculty of sight, yet it needs the light of the sun to be able to see. In the same way, human reason, which resembles the eye, needs the light of the sun of Prophethood. And when that sun disappears reason becomes confused and dark; just as you cannot see with the eye alone, you cannot see without the light of Prophethood.

As the recognition of God always depends upon the recognition of a Prophet, it is not possible to recognize the Unity of God without him. A Prophet is a mirror for the observance of the Divine. God can only be seen through this mirror.

When God Almighty designs to reveal Himself to the world, He raises a Prophet, who is a manifestation of Divine powers, and sends down His revelation to him and manifests His Divine powers through him. It is then that the world comes to know that God exists.

[Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 22, pp. 114-116)

The Perfect Man: The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

Summary of Friday Sermon delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on February 23rd, 2007. The “aba” after his name is an abbreviation for the prayer, ayyuda hullah binarsrihil aziz (May Allah strengthen his hand).

Citing verse 128 of Surah Al Taubah (9:128) Huzur gave a discourse on the supreme compassion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} in his Friday Sermon.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is the superlative and the matchless example of imbibing Divine attribute on a human level and it is from his spiritual light that the world attained beneficence, is indeed attaining beneficence and shall continue to do so.

The Promised Messiah^{as} wrote: The man who in his being and his attributes and his

actions and through his spiritual and holy faculties set an example of perfection, in knowledge and action and in sincerity and steadfastness, and was called the perfect man was Muhammad^{sa}... The man who was most perfect as man and as Prophet, and came with full blessings, and who through a spiritual revival and resurrection manifested the first judgment in the world and revived the dead world, that blessed Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets, the leader of the righteous ones, the pride of the Prophets, was Muhammad^{sa}, the chosen one. Our Lord, send down on that beloved Prophet that mercy and blessing that Thou hast not sent down on anyone since the beginning of the world. Had that grand Prophet not appeared in the world then we would have no proof of the truth of lesser Prophets like Jonah, Job, Jesus son of Mary, Malachi, John, Zakaria, etc. Though they were favourites and honoured and were beloved ones of Almighty God, they are under obligation to this Prophet that they were accepted in the world

as true Prophets. O Allah, send down Thy blessings on him and on his people and on his companions, all of them. Our last word is that all praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds (Essence of Islam Vol. 1 p. 199)

He wrote that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} had a love of God of the highest degree as well as he endured deep poignancy in his great love for creation. His compassion for humanity, borne out of Rahimiyyat, was so intense that the Qur'an has safeguarded it

in the verse above. His sentiments of sympathy as cited in the verse are both for the believers as well as the disbelievers. The disbelievers put him through the severest of persecution alongside his followers, yet the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} deeply desired their well-being and wished them to take the right path. In the instances when he defended himself it was strictly a case of defence and never exceeded to anything more. There was certainly no question of retaliation, ever.

When God admonished the disbelievers to desist and warned them of a torment in- waiting, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} would be deeply distressed on their behalf and would pray for them as the Quranic verse of Surah Al Kahf depicts (18:7).

Ahmad^{aba} said today even a father does not have so much concern for the worldly and spiritual well-being of his children, while the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} only had a bond of humanity with these people.

Next Ahmad^{aba} cited some Ahadith to elucidate the subject, how the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} taught prayers seeking Divine mercy and enjoined ways to seek utmost blessings. His compassion for the believers was so intense that he would pray to God to make any harsh words that he may have said to a believer a source of Divine nearness for him on the Day of Judgment. Such are the traits of this compassionate and merciful Prophet who was anxious to raise the spiritual development of his followers and was just as anxious for the salvation of those who did not follow him.

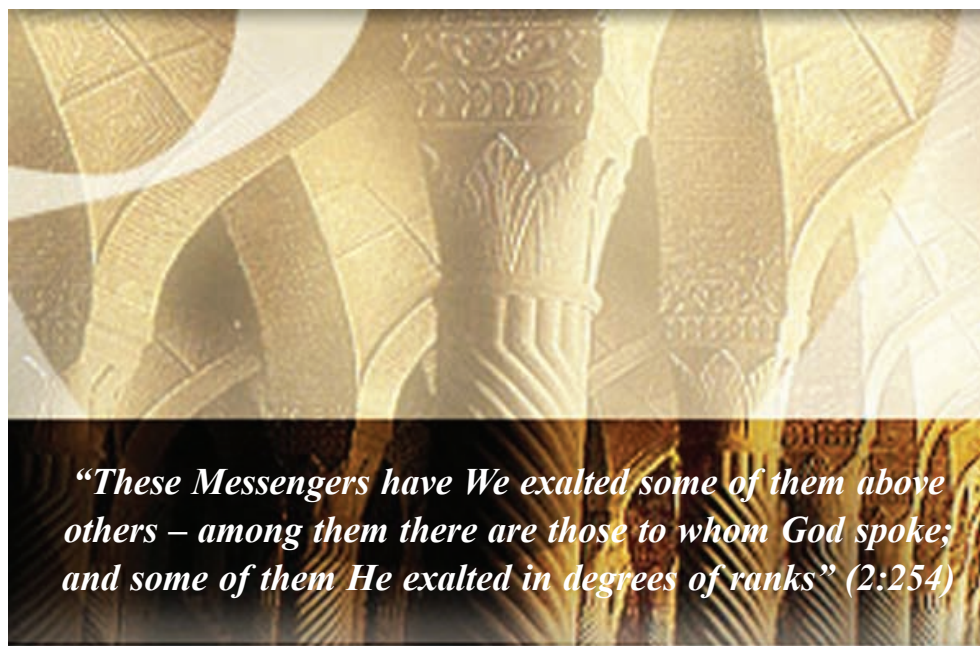
Editor's Note: The sermon was translated by the alislam.org and the Muslim Sunrise staff.

The man who was most perfect as man and as Prophet, and came with full blessings, and who through a spiritual revival and resurrection manifested the first judgment in the world and revived the dead world, that blessed Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets, the leader of the righteous ones, the pride of the Prophets, was Muhammad^{sa}, the chosen one.

Prophets of God: The Islamic Perspective

By Imam Mubasher Ahmad

To make prophecies concerning some future events is not the only function of a Prophet of God. No doubt, the knowledge of the unseen is given to him, and he can foretell some minor or major developments, but there is more to his task as a Prophet. The Holy Qur'an declares that every nation in the world has had a Prophet: "For every nation there is a messenger" (10:48). Again, "There is not a group of people but a Warner has gone among them" (35:25). Prophet Muhammad^{sa} once said that there were 124,000 prophets sent to mankind throughout history. According to the teachings of Islam, a Prophet is never self-appointed. It is always God Who selects a man from among the people and "reveals" to him his mission. The terms "Prophet" (*nabi*; pl. *anbiya*), "Messenger" (*rasul*; pl. *rusul*) and "Envoy" (*mursal*, pl. *mursaleen*) are interchangeably used in the Holy Qur'an. Thus, from the Islamic perspective, a Prophet claims to be 'sent'



"These Messengers have We exalted some of them above others – among them there are those to whom God spoke; and some of them He exalted in degrees of ranks" (2:254)

from God. He declares to be an ambassador of the Divine who carries His message for uplifting the moral and spiritual condition of his people.

Mission of the Prophets

In essence, all the Prophets brought the same message to their people: Worship One God, shun sinfulness and transgression, and love and serve each other. Next to worship of One God, the most important task assigned to them was "purification" by working moral, social and spiritual reformation among their people. Their main purpose was to free humans from the bondage of sin. They reprovved and denounced sin and called for repentance. They were bearers of good news to those who believed and acted righteously; and they forewarned those who rejected the clear Signs of God that the consequence of their evil lifestyle would be severe. They made the terror of the Divine Judgment clear to the sinners. All the Prophets were "witnesses" over specific groups of people bearing personal testimonies to the existence of God and that the doors of spiritual advancement were open to all. In addition, imparting "wisdom" in physical and intellectual matters, establishing a just society and taking care of human rights were included in their divinely assigned functions.

The Holy Qur'an tells us that the earlier Prophets were given limited tasks and they remained focused on eradication of some specific evils prevalent among particular people of their time. For example, Prophet Abraham^{as} smashed idol-worship and established monotheism. Lot was to stop homosexuality. Moses^{as} liberated his people from pharaoh's enslavement, and gave the Commandments of God. Jesus^{as} taught mutual love to the Israelites against their rigid legalist approach to life. But when the means of communication among nations developed, and the world started to proceed towards globalization, then a universal Prophet, Muhammad^{sa}, was sent to all mankind. He was directed by God to openly proclaim the universality of his mission: "Say, O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of God to you all, of Him Whose is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth" (7:159). Again, "We have not sent you but as a bearer of good news and as a Warner to all mankind" (34:29). "And We have not sent you but as a mercy for all peoples" (21:108).

Islam teaches that all the Prophets are commissioned by God for the same purpose, that is, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They exerted to achieve that goal by bringing mankind into submission of God's Will. As far as their acceptance by the believers and obedience to them is concerned, in Islam there is no division between them, and all the Prophets are considered as one body. The Holy Qur'an directs the Muslims: "Say ye, 'We

All Prophets, according to Islamic teachings, were free of sin. They received the Holy Spirit from God and were divinely inspired. They had firm faith that what was revealed to them was from God. They imparted to others what they received from God. They were the most righteous among their people, were truthful, just and possessors of high morals.

believe in God and in that which has been revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Abraham^{as} and Ishmael^{as} and Isaac^{as} and Jacob^{as} and the tribes, and in that which was given to Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as}, and in that which was given to the Prophets of other nations from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit ourselves” (2:137). Again, “This Messenger (Muhammad^{sa}) of Ours believes in that which has been revealed to him from His Lord, and so do the believers; all of them believe in God, and His angels, and His Books, and all Messengers, saying ‘We make no distinction between any of His Messengers;’ and they say, ‘We have heard and are obedient. Our Lord, we implore Your forgiveness, and to You is the returning’” (2:286). In Islam, to reject any one of the Prophets is an act of unbelief. “Those who disbelieve in God and His Messengers and desire to make a distinction between God and His Messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others’, and desire to take a course in between – these are truly disbelievers” (4:151-152).

However, as the scope of the divinely assigned mission varied from Prophet to Prophet, the Holy Qur’an states that there are different ranks of the Prophets. “And We have exalted some of the Prophets over the others” (17:56). “These Messengers have We exalted some of them above others – among them there are those to whom God spoke; and some of them He exalted in degrees of ranks” (2:254). For example, Moses^{as} and Muhammad^{sa} resemble each other as Law-bearing Prophets. However, the sphere of Mosaic Law was limited to

the Israelites while the Law of Islam as revealed to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} has universal application. There are many Prophets who did not bring any new law, and they followed the law brought by previous Prophets. “We gave Moses^{as} the Book, and after him sent succeeding Messengers” (2:88).

Characteristics of Prophets

All Prophets, according to Islamic teachings, were free of sin. They received the Holy Spirit from God and were divinely inspired. They had firm faith that what was revealed to them was from God. They imparted to others what they received from God. They were the most righteous among their people, were truthful, just and possessors of high morals. They were selected by God from among the people, and they spoke local languages. They were all loving persons, serving others selflessly, concerned about their welfare. They always remained submissive to the Will of God, and worshipped none but One God. They were able to show miracles and signs to prove the power of God and to bring their people to God. They remained strongly connected with God, having constant communication with Him. Their prayers were accepted. Blessed by God and His angels, they became a source of blessing for their followers. Usually, they were family men, married, with children. They had ‘professions’ to earn their livelihood. Being mortals, they met their death, as any other human.

Obedience to all the Prophets is required by God. The believers are instructed to revere them and adhere to their teachings faithfully. After saying the name of a Prophet, the words “peace be on him” are added to show respect and loyalty to them. They are to be followed, but not to be taken as Lords beside the One God. However, all the Prophets faced bitter opposition. Satan put obstacles in their way. At times they

were mocked at, fought with, and rebelled against; attempts were even made by their enemies to kill them. But they remain patient, steadfast, resolute and courageous. In the end, with the help of God, they were victorious over all opposition. Thus, in their personal lives they set an example as models for others to be followed.

The chain of Prophets started with the advent of Adam^{as}. He was the first Prophet, a vicegerent of God on the earth. The Holy Qur’an mentions only a few Prophets by name. Some of them are well-known Biblical Prophets such as Noah^{as}, Abraham^{as}, Ishmael^{as}, Isaac^{as}, Jacob^{as}, Joseph^{as}, Job^{as}, Moses^{as}, Aaron^{as}, David^{as}, Solomon^{as}, and Jesus^{as}, while others are non-Biblical, such as Hud^{as} and Luqman^{as}. Many are not mentioned by name. “And certainly We sent Messengers before you (Muhammad^{sa}). There are some of them that We have mentioned to you and there are others whom We have not mentioned to you” (40:79). As the Holy Qur’an emphatically claims that all nations in the world have been sent Prophets, it would not be wrong to conclude that the founders of world religions, such as Buddha Rama^{as}, Krishna^{as}, Zoroaster^{as} and Mani^{as} must have been among the Prophets of God. In the Holy Qur’an, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} has been mentioned as the Seal of all the Prophets and is believed to be the best of the best, the final Law-bearing Prophet. In the words of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the status of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is the highest of all:

“When we impartially evaluate from the entire succession of prophethood, we find the most courageous and living prophet, and the dearest prophet to God, to be only one, who is the chief of the prophets, the pride of the prophets, the crown of the messengers, whose name is Muhammad Mustafa and Ahmad Mujtaba, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him”

[Siraaj-e-Munir, Ruhani Khazain, Vol 12, p. 82].

“...The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.”

- The Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}
(Saheeh Bukhari Vol IV, Book 55, Number 652)



Naser-ud-Din Shams

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community views science and religion as two faces of the same coin. The Holy Qur'an equally promotes both as expressions of Truth. Thus, they should always be in agreement. If they are not, it's because we have failed to understand all of the facts.

This is fundamental to how Islam reconciles the "creation" of Adam^{as} with the theory of evolution. The Qur'an documents numerous facts which support the concept of evolution, but emphasizes the intervening Hand of God. More importantly, being a book of moral development, the Holy Qur'an merely uses these facts as a canvas upon which it paints the parable of our spiritual evolution from animals to angels.

The Holy Qur'an urges Muslims to scientifically observe the Universe:

"Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the Kingdom...Who created death and life that He might try you – which of you is best in deeds...No imperfection can you see in the creation of the Gracious *God*. Then look again. Do you see any flaw? Then look again, and yet again. Your sight will *have no choice but to return to you mystified and fatigued, having found no fault.*" [Holy Qur'an 67: 2 to 5]

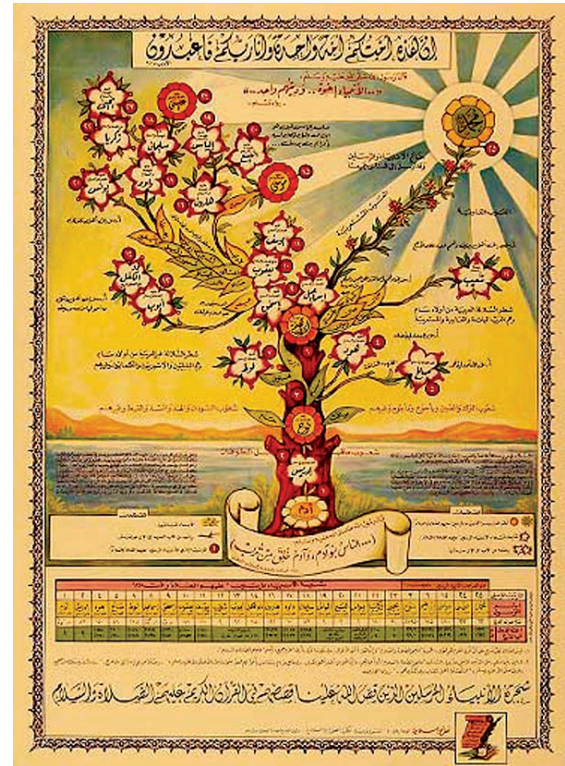
God's creation was designed for the development and progress of man, who was created as an intermediary between the animal and the angel. Evolution had taught his animal self to flee from the inescapable – death. Death riddled his mind with ambiguity and fear. Countless philosophers have wrestled

ADAM

Created **OR** Evolved?

According to Islam, God made His Message known to people through His messengers - the prophets. Muhammad was the culmination of a long line of prophets. Prophet trees like the one shown in this picture are a popular subject.

At the bottom of the trunk stands the name of Adam. Following are the names of other prophets: Noah, Lot, Salih, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Jesus, to name a few. The tree is crowned by a large flower at top right. This is Muhammad. Beside his name: "The seal of the prophets and envoys: he was sent for all of humanity."



this concept only to find themselves victims of its obscurity.

Ironically, in death there was life - it propelled humankind to progress further and evolve into the beings we are today. We enjoy the present comforts of life because our ancestors sought refuge from the mystery and fear of death. Inherent within this struggle for survival was a test – would we choose to be like selfish animals, or selfless angels? This formed the basis of how God would see who was “best in deeds,” and one day put us on the receiving end of our own actions – an awaiting Heaven or Hell.

Origin of Life

The Holy Qur’an states life originated from water and clay:

“...With water did We create every living thing...” [21:31]

“He...created you from clay (humid or moist earth)...” [6:3]

“He created man from dry ringing clay like pieces of pottery.” [55:15]

Scientific attempts to explain the origin of life support the Qur’an’s statements. Organic material necessary for life, formed from inorganic compounds by eliminating water molecules. However, since this oc-

curred in the prehistoric seas, the water molecules would have been quickly replaced, reversing the reaction.

This led scientists to believe the primordial solution splashed upon beaches of clay and mud, upon which it evaporated, thus paving the way for life.

Creation of Adam^{as}

Religions tend to promote the spontaneous creation theory. Aside from the various explanations, it basically boils down to God pointing His Finger and, “Poof,” there was Adam^{as}! Out of his rib was created Eve, and the rest is history. However, the Holy Qur’an challenges humankind to reconsider such simplicity:

“What is the matter with you that you expect not wisdom and staidness from God? And He has created you in *different forms and ever varying states.*” [71 : 14-15]

This verse supports the gradual evolu-

tion of humankind, but asserts it was guided by the Hand of God. Although our ancestors millions of years ago may have looked like us, they were animals. The Ahmadi Muslim belief is we evolved from this animal state to the point where we could be called “man.” The Arabic word for man is *insaan*, which means “two loves.” It was at this stage where the human animal felt a moral duty to his Creator and His creation. This responsibility manifested itself in the form of love and man became the vessel of these “two loves.” This was the eventual purpose for which man was designed. At this stage he was ready to receive the Word of God as spiritual guidance. Every time humankind was ready to enter a new stage of development, it was ushered in by an “Adam.”

The Adam we commonly refer to was the first prophet mentioned in the Qur’an, who was designated to receive such guidance from God. He was not the first man. There were thousands of Adams before him. One account comes to us from Ibn Arabi (d.

The Adam we commonly refer to was the first prophet mentioned in the Qur’an, who was designated to receive such guidance from God. He was not the first man. There were thousands of Adams before him.

1240 AD), the renowned Muslim scholar and mystic. He wrote in his book *The Meccan Revelations* that once he saw himself in a dream talking to a man who claimed to be one of his ancestors. “How long ago did you live?” asked Ibn Arabi. “More than forty thousand years,” he replied. Surprised, Ibn Arabi said, “But this period is far greater than what separates us from Adam!” The man replied, “Of which Adam are you speaking? About the Adam nearest to you or of some other?” “Then I recollected,” says Ibn Arabi, “a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad that God had brought into being no less than one hundred thousand Adams, and I said to myself, ‘Perhaps this man was one of the previous Adams.’”

Statements in the Qur’an and Bible also support that Adam^{as} was not the first man. The Qur’an states, “... We... created you *and* then We gave you shape; then We said to the angels, ‘Submit to Adam;’ and they *all* submitted...” [7:12]. The pronoun *you* in *We created you* and *We gave you shape* is plural. In Arabic, pronouns can be singular (one person), dual (two people), or plural (three or more people). Therefore, this statement in the Qur’an asserts that human beings were created first. Subsequent to this, the verse continues saying *then We said to the angels, ‘Submit to Adam.’* The sequence makes it clear that humans were created first *then* Adam^{as} was commissioned as a prophet.

Another verse in the Qur’an states in reference to Adam^{as}, “And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am about to place a successor in the earth’...” [2:31]. The key Arabic word used here is *khalifa*, which means “successor” or “vicegerent.” By definition, Adam^{as} could not be a successor if he didn’t have predecessors, nor could he be a vicegerent if there was no community he could guide or govern.

There are several references in the Bible which support a similar conclusion. The Bible states, “Male and female created He then...and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created” [Gen 5:2]. Here the created human beings are generally referred to as *Adam* in Hebrew. We also find that Cain, the son of Adam, says after killing Abel, “...it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me” [Gen 4:14]. However, if Adam^{as} and Eve are the only other people on Earth, why would he be saying this? Later we read that Cain builds a city named after his son Enoch (Gen 4:17), but building a city appears absurd if there is

only one family – his own. Adam^{as}, we learn, has a subsequent son named Seth who marries as did Cain, but who did they marry if they were the only people on earth – their sisters?

If Adam^{as} was not the first man, there are serious consequences for the Christian Faith. Christian beliefs are based upon Adam’s sin continuing through the blood line down to all people. This is called Original Sin. The only way Christians believe one can be cleansed of this sin is to accept Jesus Christ^{as} as their savior who sacrificed himself to pay the penalty of that sin. However, if Adam^{as} is not the father of all humanity, then his sin could not have been inherited by all people, thereby precluding their need to be cleansed of sin.

Eve and the Serpent

Muslims also believe that Eve was created from the rib of Adam^{as}, but this is understood metaphorically.¹ It’s an expression describing the relationship between a man and his wife. The rib is a bone specifically designed to protect the heart. Similarly, a man finds a special emotional protection and comfort in his wife. She figuratively becomes an extension of his rib. In support of this the Qur’an states, “...He has created wives for you...that you may find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you” [30:22].

Likewise, there was no talking serpent who beguiled Adam and Eve. This metaphorically describes the deceptive person who misled the two into error. Much like a snake camouflages itself waiting for an opportune time to bite its victim, this person’s spiritual condition was manipulative. In similar fashion, Jesus refers to the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees of his time as serpents and vipers [Matt 23:33].

Spiritual Evolution

Facts in the Qur’an about evolution and creation, although scientifically valid, are merely a parable of the spiritual evolution we undergo in our lives, as we progress from one stage to another. Just as we develop in three trimesters in the wombs of our mothers prior to our birth into this world (Qur’an 39:7), we also develop in three spiritual states prior to our “birth” into the Next World. We start off as animals satiating our natural drives and desires. We then progress to the state of man where we express our love to God and our fellow creatures. Finally,

we can attain the state of angels, denying ourselves to completely submit to the Will of God.

We attain Eternal Life by detaching ourselves from the clutches of the material world. The physical body naturally inclines to these vices and pushes the soul to the “left;”² but the spiritual body (voiced by the conscience) pulls it back to the “right.” A conflict emerges as these two pull at each other. This tug of war, going back and forth, results in a crooked path (Qur’an 14:4). However, by struggling to do the right thing (*jihad*), the spiritual and physical bodies are reconciled, and in unison they progress forward on the “Straight Path,” or *Islam*. Once the believer attains this state, s/he no longer has any desire except to please the Lord. The believer ceases to exist and spiritually becomes “one” with God. This was expressed by the Holy Prophet^{as} when he narrated the words of God:

“...My servant continues closer to Me through voluntary acts of charity and worship until I love him. Then I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, his sense of sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks of Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection, I will protect him...” [Sahih Bukhari, Ar-Riqaq, Hadith # 509]

In similar context, Jesus^{as} is reported to have said:

“I and my Father are one” [John 10:30] and, “Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me [i.e. the disciples], that they may be one, as we are” [John 17:11].

When united with God in love, the believer attains immortality. It is at this point that Eternal Life is granted as the culmination of spiritual evolution.

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Footnotes

¹ The Holy Prophet understood the creation of women from the rib as metaphorically describing their nature and admonished men to treat them kindly [Sahih Bukhari, Book of Prophets, Hadeeth # 548]. Thus, he opened the door for Muslims to interpret this figuratively, so long as the Qur’an was not contradicted.

² The Holy Qur’an describes the “two highways” of good and evil (90:11), and identifies the people of the “right” hand (90:19) and the people of the “left” hand (90:20). The Qur’an characterizes the “left” side with materiality and sin, whereas the “right” symbolizes spiritual pursuits – a concept consistent with Judeo-Christian Scripture.

Prophets in Ahadith

Ahadith are the recorded sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 644:

Narrated ‘Ubada:

The Prophet said, “If anyone testifies that None has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone Who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His Slave and His Apostle, and that Jesus is Allah’s Slave and His Apostle and Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit created by Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few.”

Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 651:

Narrated Abu Huraira:

I heard Allah’s Apostle saying, “I am the nearest of all the people to the son of Mary, and all the prophets are paternal brothers, and there has been no prophet between me and him

Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 548

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah’s Apostle said, “Treat women nicely, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so, if you should try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So treat women nicely.”

Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 555

Narrated Abu Said:

Allah’s Apostle said, “Noah and his nation will come (on the Day of Resurrection and Allah will ask (Noah), “Did you convey (the Message)?” He will reply, ‘Yes, O my Lord!’ Then Allah will ask Noah’s nation, ‘Did Noah convey My Message to you?’ They will reply, ‘No, no prophet came to us.’ Then Allah will ask Noah, ‘Who will stand a witness for you?’ He will reply, ‘Muhammad and his followers (will stand witness for me).’ So, I and my followers will stand as witnesses for him (that he conveyed Allah’s Message).” That is, (the interpretation) of the Statement of Allah: “Thus we have made you a just and the best nation that you might be witnesses Over mankind ..” (2.143)



Abraham's Sacrifice... *the Rest of the Story*

By Naser-ud-Din Shams

M*ysteries of Faith – the Prophets* is a collector's edition recently published by U.S. News and World Report. Various authors comment on aspects and accomplishments of the prophets in this magazine, which was on newsstands until March 13, 2007.

The article, "Abraham's Miraculous Journey," presents the typical Judeo-

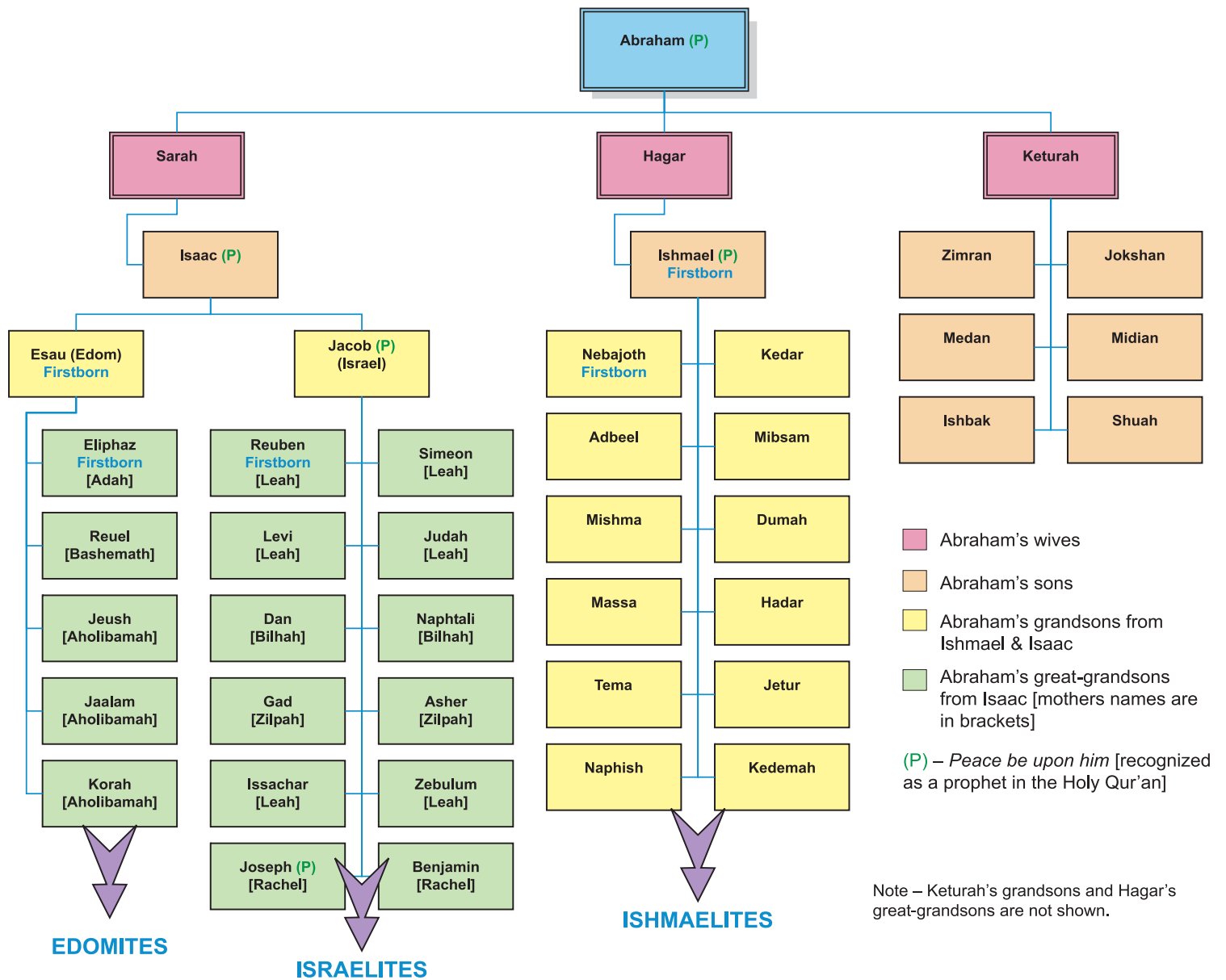
Christian version, all the while challenging key components of the mainstream Muslim perspective. The article denies Abraham^{as} or Ishmael^{as} traveled to Mecca; claims that Muhammad^{sa} never considered himself or his followers the blood descendants of Abraham^{as}; and states the Qur'an is silent as to which son was being sacrificed. These comments underscore the need to clarify the Muslim perspective in light of historical facts, scriptural evidence, and overall significance.

Hagar is Abraham's Wife & Ishmael his Son

When Abraham's^{as} wife Sarah^{ra} could not conceive, she presented Hagar^{ra} to bear him children. The Bible clearly establishes the status of Hagar^{ra} as Abraham's^{as} wife:

"And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian...and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife."
[Gen 16:3]

There are also clear references to Ishmael^{as} being Abraham's^{as} son:



“And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son’s name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.” [Gen 16:15 – 16] (see also Gen 17:23, 25-26; 21:11-13, and 25:9, 12)

Numerous attempts have been made throughout Judeo-Christian history to exclude Ishmael^{as} from God’s covenant under the pretense that his mother was a handmaid. However, a double standard is applied to Jacob’s^{as} twelve sons. When Jacob’s^{as} wives Rachel and Leah experience infertility issues as Sarah did, they similarly presented their handmaids to Jacob^{as} (known as *Israel*):

“And she [Rachel who could not conceive] gave him [Jacob] Bilhah, her handmaid to wife...And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.” [Gen 30:4-5]

“When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife. And Zilpah Leah’s maid bare Jacob a son.” [Gen 30:9-10]

All twelve of Jacob’s^{as} sons are undisputed beneficiaries of God’s promises given in His covenant with Abraham^{as}, regardless of whether born by concubines or not. They are the progenitors of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Ishmael - Exiled or Exalted?

Having cherished the birth of Ishmael^{as} at such a late age, Abraham^{as} surprisingly sends him off to a barren land – the wilderness of Paran. The Judeo-Christian version tells us that Abraham’s first wife Sarah, saw Ishmael^{as} “mocking,” and for that reason, urged Abraham^{as} to oust Ishmael^{as} and Hagar (Gen 21:9). Abraham^{as} then exiles the two, abandoning them in the desert with a meager ration of bread and a bottle of water (Gen 21:14).

The Muslim version is quite different. In spite of any domestic jealousies, Muslims believe God commanded Abraham^{as} to dedicate Ishmael^{as} to re-establish the original House of God, the Ka’aba in Mecca. In return

for this sacrifice, Ishmael^{as} would be exalted as a nation and partake in God's covenant with Abraham^{as}.

The two points-of-view also differ regarding Ishmael's age when sent away. Muslim traditions state Ishmael was an infant, whereas the Biblical account places him well into his teens. The Bible states Ishmael^{as} was sent away after Isaac was weaned (Gen 21:8) - the weaning period being three years. Since the Bible indicates Ishmael^{as} was 14 years older than Isaac^{as}, Ishmael^{as} would have been at least 17 at the time of his departure. However, the age of 17 does not appear reasonable given the following Biblical statements: Abraham^{as} puts the child on Hagar's^{ta} shoulder (Gen 21:14); Hagar^{ta} casts the child under a shrub (Gen 21:15); and the angel of God tells Hagar^{ta} to lift up Ishmael^{as} and hold him in her hand (Gen 21:18). These activities are inconceivable with a seventeen year old and challenge the credibility of the Biblical account.

What motivated Abraham^{as} to send away his firstborn is of fundamental importance in understanding the Belief Systems under review – was it his obedience to God, or to his wife Sarah?

Islam promotes the belief that prophets completely submit to God. Although they can err as humans, they do not willfully commit sin. Three components define sin in Islam: *knowledge* that the act is a sin; *intention* to perpetrate the act; and the actual *perpetration* of the act. Absence of any one of these three negates the commission of sin. Thus, Islam defines sin as the collusion of the *Mind*, *Heart*, and *Hand* in disobeying the Word of God.

Abraham^{as} completely submitted to the Will of God, not the will of his wife Sarah; and he refrained from all sin.

Identity of the Sacrificial Son

Another dispute involves Abraham's^{as} famous dream in which he sacrifices his son. Jews and Christians believe the son was Isaac^{as}, whereas Muslims generally believe he was Ishmael^{as}. The Bible states:

“[God said take]...thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering...” [Gen 22:2]

However, there is a major problem with this verse. Isaac^{as} was never the “only son”

of Abraham^{as}. He was born fourteen years after Ishmael^{as}, when Abraham^{as} was one hundred years old (Gen 21:5). Ishmael^{as} fits the description of the “only son” of Abraham^{as} and Moriah bears a strong resemblance to Marwah, a hillock in Mecca, from where Hagar is believed to have desperately run about looking for water. The miraculous well God blessed her with (Gen 21:19) still runs today in Mecca and is called *Zam Zam*.

Although the Qur'an does not explicitly mention Ishmael^{as} as the sacrificed son, it is clear from the context of the following verses:

“So We gave him [Abraham] the glad tidings of a **forbearing** son. And when he was old enough to run along with him, he said, ‘O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I offer you in sacrifice. So consider what you think of it!’ He replied, ‘O my father, do as you are commanded; you will find me, if Allah please, one of the **steadfast**.’ And when they both submitted to *what they perceived as the Will of God*, and Abraham had thrown him down on his forehead, We called to him, ‘O Abraham, you have indeed fulfilled the dream...’” [37:102 – 106]

It is only after narrating this incident that the Qur'an then introduces Isaac^{as}: “And We gave him [Abraham^{as}] the glad tidings of Isaac^{as}, a prophet, and *one* of the righteous.” [37:113]

Further, the Qur'an distinctly identifies Ishmael as one of the **steadfast** (21:86), whereas Isaac^{as} is never described as such. Some Muslim traditions point to Isaac as the son to be sacrificed, but sources for these are known as *Israiliyyat* (Judeo-Christian influence as the communities intermixed). Regardless, traditions carry negligible credibility against the towering testimony of the Qur'an.

Meaning of the Dream

Divine dreams can be literal, but are generally clothed in metaphor. The meaning of Abraham's^{as} dream was not to literally slaughter Ishmael^{as}. On the contrary, it was a metaphoric depiction of the great sacrifice Abraham^{as} made when he dedicated his infant son to the service of God in Mecca.

Thus, when Abraham^{as} was about to literally carry out this dream with Ishmael's^{as} consent, God revealed that Abraham^{as} had already “fulfilled the dream” (Qur'an 37:106). This established the precedent that whenever a person is “sacrificed,” it is not meant in the literal manner of slaughtering, but their spiritual devotion to God.

This interpretation is consistent with the Judeo-Christian tradition. In Hebrew, one of the words for sacrifice is pronounced *tenoofah*. It is typically translated as “wave offering”. In the Old Testament, God orders the tribe of Levi to be dedicated to His service:

...present the Levites before the Lord as a wave offering [*tenoofah*] from the sons of Israel...to perform the service of the Lord. [Nu 8:11] (see also 8:13,15, & 21)

The above reference applies when the sacrifice is people. However, this sacrifice can apply to other items of material value which one offers in the way of the Lord for blessings or forgiveness: gold (Ex 35:22,24); bread (Le 23:17); or slaughtered animals (Le 7:34).

Location of the Ishmaelites

Again, the Biblical account does not appear consistent with its own verses. If Abraham's^{as} intention was to banish Ishmael^{as} into the unknown Negev desert strictly to appease his wife Sarah's jealousy, then further contact with Ishmael^{as} would have been highly unlikely. However, an important piece of evidence surfaces:

“[Abraham] died in a good old age...and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him...” [Gen 25:8-9]

From this we can conclude that Abraham^{as} knew exactly where he left Hagar and Ishmael^{as}. Ishmael^{as} must have been in constant contact to learn about his father's death, and subsequently bury him. This corroborates the Islamic perspective that Abraham^{as} dedicated Ishmael^{as} to serve the already known sacred site in Mecca:

“Our Lord, I have settled of my progeny in an uncultivable valley near Your



Ishmael's^{as} descendants settled from Havilah to Shur (Gen 25:18) which places them in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina - Note Havilah located in the lower left corner of the Arabian peninsula. Source: Historical Textbook and Atlas of Biblical Geography (1854) by Coleman.

Sacred House...that they may observe Prayer..." [Qur'an 14:38]

There is additional evidence from the Bible that Ishmael^{as} and his descendants settled in Arabia. Ishmael^{as} dwells in the wilderness of Paran (Gen 21:21). Biblical scholars locate Paran east of the Sinai. However, Arab geographers have always referred to the valley between Mecca and Medina as Faran. Since there is no "P" sound in Arabic, this sound tends to be replaced with "F" in ancient words. For example, *Palestine* is called *Falasteen*, and *Persian* is pronounced *Farsi*. Similarly, the Biblical *Paran* is the Arabic *Faran*. Faran means "two refugees" which, once again, is consistent with the Islamic account that Hagar and Ishmael^{as} were both given refuge at God's House in Mecca. The valley was subsequently named after them.

The Bible identifies twelve sons of Ishmael^{as}: Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah (Gen 25:13-17). They are considered princes and towns are named after them. The book of Isaiah (21:13-17) places Kedar and Tema in Arabia. Similarly, the book of Ezekiel (27:21) locates Kedar in Arabia.

Ishmael's^{as} descendants settled from Havilah to Shur (Gen 25:18) which places them in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina. Ancient maps corroborate this.

Scriptural Prejudice

Of a more serious nature is the question of Biblical integrity. As these texts were authored by Israelites, a bias emerges in which they self-crown themselves as the sole beneficiaries of Abraham's^{as} covenant with God. In the case of Ishmael^{as} and his mother Hagar, this manifests in the double standard already discussed. However, the same prejudice targets Esau, Isaac's^{as} firstborn (also known as Edom) – not surprising when we learn Esau married the daughter of Ishmael^{as}.

The antagonism is all too clear. Psalm 83 describes the Ishmaelites and Edomites as enemies of God and invokes God to destroy them. In the New Testament, Paul confirms the belief that Jacob was "loved" and Esau was "hated" (Ro 9:13), yet no explanation outside Biblical bigotry can be found.

More disturbing is the unusual license given to Jacob's^{as} unscrupulous activity. Jacob^{as} deceived his aging and blind father, Isaac^{as}, into thinking that he was the firstborn son, Esau. Under this deception, Isaac^{as} blessed Jacob^{as} (Gen 27:18 to 24) instead of Esau. In retaliation for this lie, the Bible tells us Jacob^{as} is rewarded as the father of the Chosen People. This sets a dangerous precedent, encouraging immorality, racism, and bigotry.

Aside from these biased assertions, the Holy Qur'an acknowledges blessed lineage from both, Ishmael^{as} and Isaac^{as} – attested to by historical facts. God's covenant promised Abraham's^{as} progeny "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen 17:8). Israelites ruled all of Canaan for only a few hundred years – from the time of King David^{as} until the fall of Samaria and the northern kingdom of Israel. They could not have been the only heirs of Abraham's^{as} covenant. However, if the Ishmaelites are included in the blessings of the covenant, then God's promise is fulfilled. In hindsight, one would have to decide whether God failed in his promise or the Biblical authors failed in their integrity.

Essence of the Story

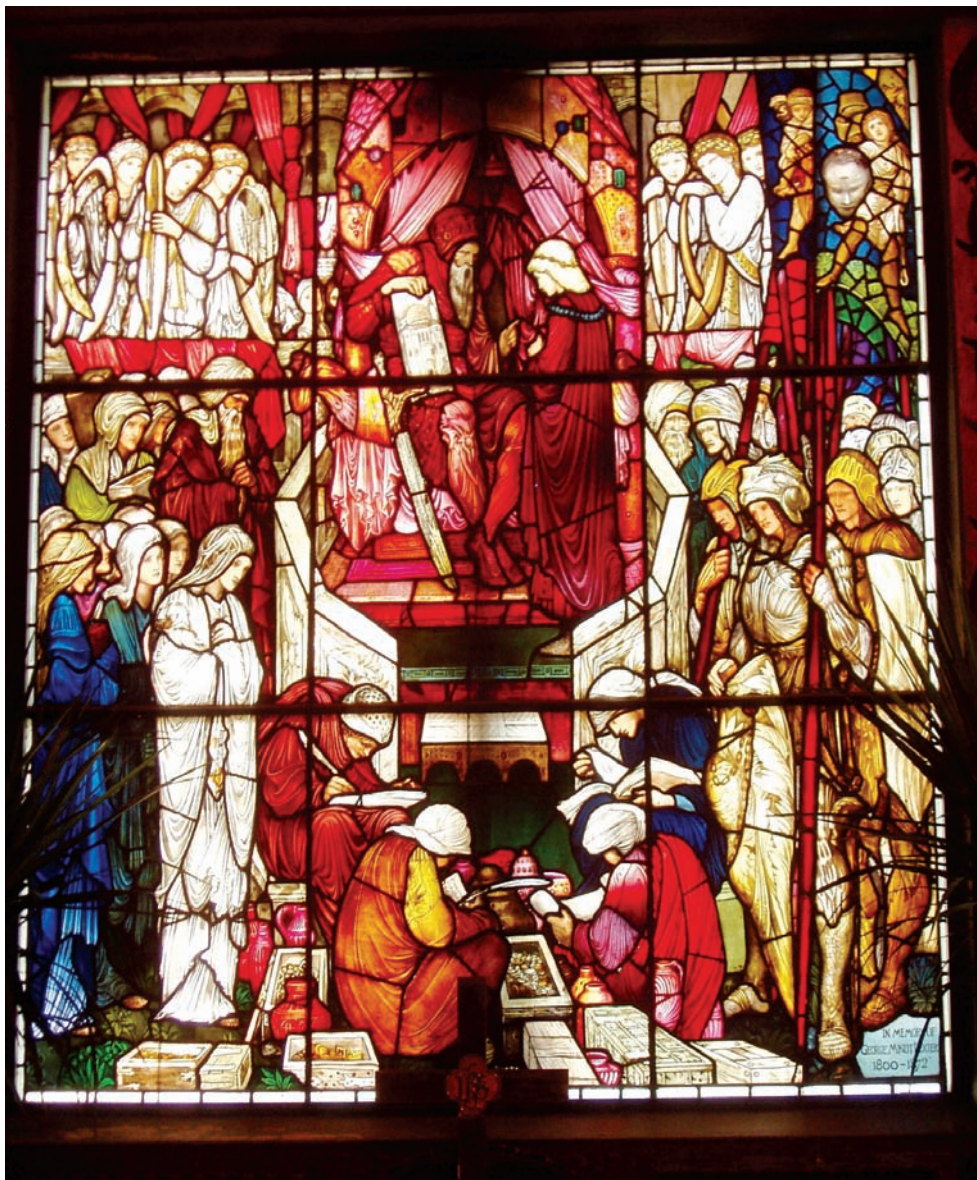
The Qur'an is a book of spirituality, not history. Although its facts harmonize with modern historical research, its purpose in recounting those events is to spiritually elevate. The story of Abraham^{as} illustrates the ultimate expression of love – sacrifice.

By struggling (*jihad*) to cut ourselves free from the bondage of materiality, greeds, and lusts, we spiritually elevate ourselves to God. As we sacrifice our physical desires, we are united with God in love. This is the "Straight Path" which is complete submission to His Will – *Islam*. At this point the believer is granted God's promise of Immortal Blessings, be they the fruits of this life – *progeny*, or the fruits of the Next – *Paradise*.

In the end, all praise belongs to Allah ♦

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David and Solomon: Kings, Prophets & Servants of God

By Naeem Ahmad Rathore

The Holy Qur'an states that there is no nation for whom a Warner, Apostle, Messenger or Prophet was not raised.

It, however, mentions only a small number of prophets by name. The Qur'an has no genealogies or personal histories of any prophet or people. According to the Qur'anic style, only that part of their life work is mentioned that is necessary in the first instance, for providing comfort and guidance to the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him and, thereafter for the continuous reformation of mankind for all times. The Holy Qur'an also provides the correct versions of the prophet's stories narrated in earlier scriptures, which, over the centuries, in translations and in revisions, has been missed, changed or corrupted.

Prophet David^{as} (Daud) is first mentioned in Sura *Al Baqarah* as he completes the work of the restoration of the Israelites, and finishes off the forces of evil, (Goliath), and is given Wisdom and Kingdom by God. (2:252) In Sura *Bani Israel* God declares "And we gave David the 'Zabur'" which signifies scriptures or 'Psalms'. (17:56) Longer accounts are found in Suras *Al Anbiya*, *Saba* and *Saad*. We learn that Prophet David^{as} was a man of much wisdom and physical prowess, who always resorted to God for succor in all matters: He was given mastery over mountains and the birds (121:81), and was given knowledge of working with Iron, which was made 'pliant' for him. (34:11). In the allegorical style of the Holy Qur'an, the 'mountains' may also mean men of great stature or the rebellious and headstrong highland dwellers. The 'birds' may, of course, be actual birds used for carrying messages or trained for other purposes. There is likelihood, too, that the word signifies men of high intellect, and militarily speaking, swift acting forces like light cavalry. There is

repeated mention of his being given exceptional wisdom, insight and discerning judgment, in addition to the great kingdom and mastery over the land. King David^{as} ruled with a just but firm hand, subjugating the rebellious tribes by force of arms. (21:79)

His wisdom, sagacity and mastery of the affairs of state are further elaborated in Sura *Saad*, as is his deep adoration and devout obedience to the Almighty to whom he turns repeatedly, seeking His protection against all human lapses. God commends Prophet David^{as} to stay firm on his adopted course of righteousness and deal justly without fear or favor between the people, reminding him that he is God's vicegerent on earth. The Holy Qur'an clears him of all accusations of being unjust, immoral, committing adultery and other calumnies; declaring instead that '*We gave him our protection, he had a position of nearness with Us and an excellent retreat*' (38:18-27)

In the *Hadith* literature, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is reputed to have said that Prophet David^{as} only consumed what he had earned by the labor of his own hands, that his scriptures were made easy for him to remember and recite. He also said that the best form of fasting is that of Prophet David^{as} who would fast continually on alternate days. (Bukhari 646 et seq)

And Solomon (Sulaiman) was heir to David. *And he said: O ye people, we have been taught the language of the birds and we have had everything bestowed upon us. This indeed is God's manifest grace.* (27:17). This is a unique instance in the history of the prophets that while kingdom, worldly domain and possessions may pass from father to son; prophethood does not. Solomon^{as} was an heir not only to the temporal power of his father but also to his spiritual knowledge and was chosen to continue his mission. The commentators have likened the 'language of the birds' to the speech and communications of high spiritual nature, signifying that both were Elects of God who had been given all that was required for the Israelites to attain Power and Glory.

The story of Prophet Solomon^{as} is told in several chapters of the Holy Qur'an. The longest account is in Sura *Al Naml*. He has a large force of *Jinn*, men and birds under his command, formed in separate divisions (27:18) *Jinn* may signify the wild tribes who had not been subjugated before or a 'stealth' type of

force whose movements were secret and whose capabilities were unknown to the enemy, or even the heavy fighting contingent, not unlike today's armored corps. 'Men' being the foot soldiers and 'birds' as mentioned before, may be light cavalry and/or intelligence gathering units. These forces were very orderly and certainly more developed than that of Prophet David^{as}. Indeed, the discipline and piety of the force was well known and is explained in the next few verses: When they pass the valley populated by the *Naml* tribe, their chief warns his people to stay within their houses as the Army may unknowingly cause them harm.

From this and other passages the sense emerges that the reign of Prophet Solomon^{as} was indeed a benevolent one. His army was a deterrent to the errant tribes, and he expanded his domain, to the greater glory to God, mainly by superior wisdom, and judicious use of threat of force. Peace and prosperity reigned in his kingdom. *And to Solomon We subjugated the wind* (34:10). And he made much use of the winds, as his ships were able to cut the passage of a month into a traveling duration of a day. God also gave him access to mineral resources and with the subjugation of hitherto unknown artisans; there was a building boom and greatly enhanced standard of living under King Solomon^{as}. (34:13). He also exploited the wealth of the ocean, and used chains, (block and tackle) to bring about heavy construction. (38:36-38) God did all this so that the House of David^{as} would be grateful and appreciate the blessings. Alas, only a few did. And Solomon's^{as} heirs were neither righteous nor worthy of the duties of state. The internal dissention ate away like termites and the staff of sovereignty passed away from his heirs (34:11-16) His heir is called *Mere bodies* (38:35). Prophet Solomon^{as} had perceived this, and asked for God's protection and for a kingdom that would not be suitable to any after him.

The story of Queen of Sheba, *Bilqis* is related with much detail in Sura *Al Naml*. Solomon^{as} gets her news from an officer of his court, *Hudhud*: That the people adored the Sun, and the devil has lulled them into complacency and enticed them away from the worship of God. Prophet Solomon^{as} sends her an epistle that starts with: *In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful* (This is the first recorded use of the opening benediction of all works of Islam and of Muslims in their daily lives) He invites her to '*behave not proudly and come to me in submission*' (27:23 et seq)

The 'proud behavior' was the arrogance in sticking to false beliefs, while the submission refers to peaceful acquiescence of his superior power and also has the benevolent purpose of avoiding bloodshed. The Queen seeks advice from her chiefs who assure her that even though they have military might to meet an onslaught; there are other dimensions, i.e. the matters of faith and beliefs, which only she could decide. (27:33-34)

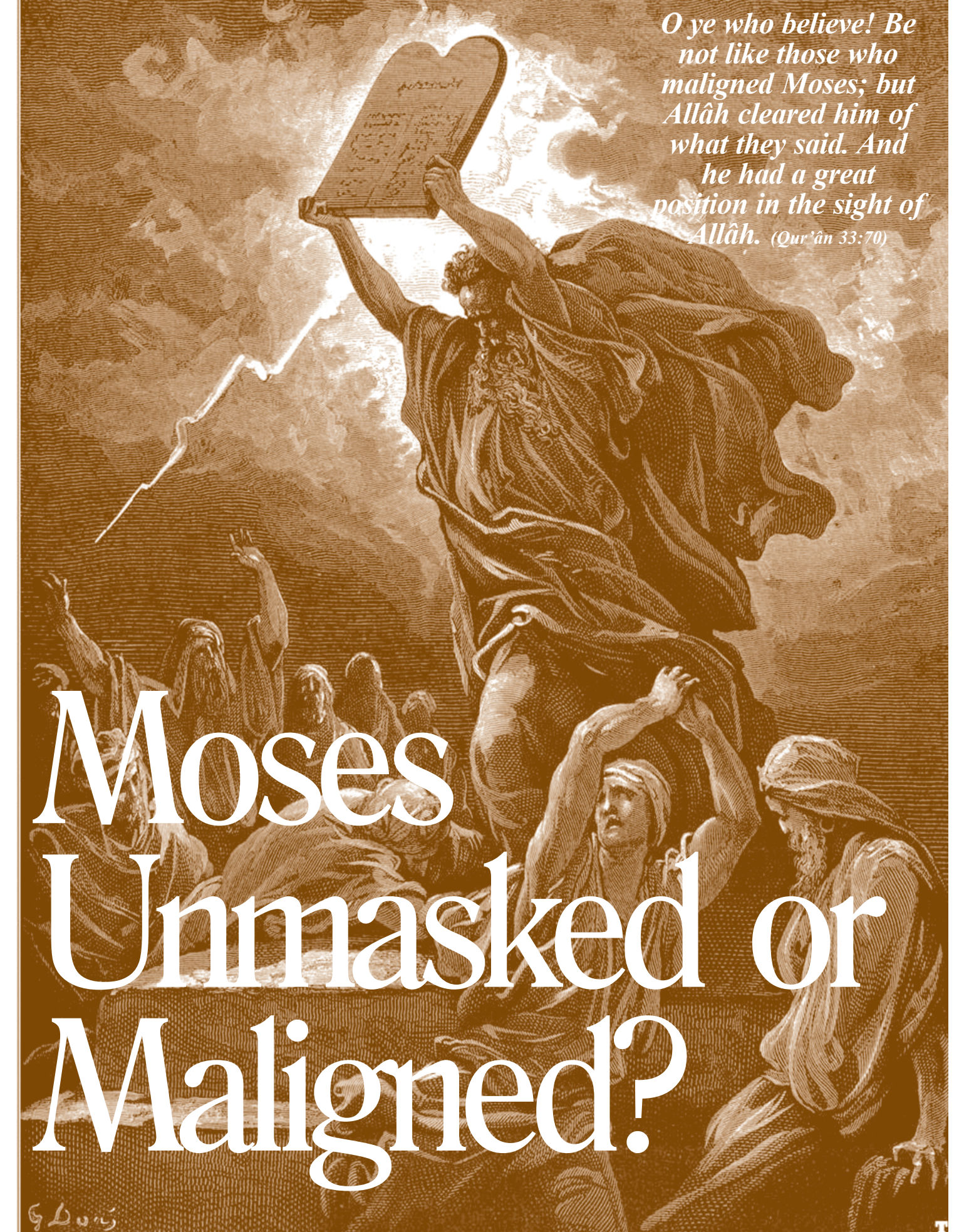
The Queen understands warfare, but the question of faith troubles her. So she tries to buy time by sending Solomon^{as} valuable gifts, including a 'throne'. He is offended by the Queen's behavior, and sends her an ultimatum. This, combined with the great efficiency and advanced science and technical proficiency of his court, convinces the Queen and she shows her willingness to submit to Solomon^{as}. On her arrival at his court, he has her enter the palace through a walkway of slabs of clear glass, under which clear water was made to flow. The Queen is perplexed by this and she '*uncovered her shank*' to meet this difficulty. *Solomon advised her that 'it is a palace paved with slabs of glass'*. She recognizes her error that just as she mistook the slabs of glass as running water, she also mistook the Sun to be the real source of light, and not as an instrument of God's working. She nobly confesses *My Lord, I have indeed wronged my soul; and I submit myself with Solomon to God, the Lord of the Worlds* (27:45)

Prophet Solomon^{as} has been cleared in the Holy Qur'an of all charges of misconduct that are mentioned in other scriptures, including that of idol-worship: *And Solomon did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved.* (2:103) He, too, is called an *excellent servant*, and he preferred the love of good things as this reminded him of his Lord (38:31-33)

Thereupon (Solomon) smiled and said (praying) *My Lord! Rouse me up that I may offer thanks for the favors You have bestowed upon me and my forefathers. And that I should do such deeds of righteousness as may please You, and count me through Your mercy with Your righteous servants (Amen)* (27:20) *u*

All references are from the Holy Qur'an

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O ye who believe! Be not like those who maligned Moses; but Allâh cleared him of what they said. And he had a great position in the sight of Allâh. (Qur'ân 33:70)

Moses Unmasked or Maligned?

This brief pronouncement by the Holy Qur'ân conveys a wealth of guidance. Firstly, Islam does not permit that a person should malign Prophet Moses^{as}. That is to say, reverence for this great spiritual leader is tied with faith. Furthermore, Allâh absolved the Israelite Prophet of the slander against him. Thirdly, Prophet Moses^{as} enjoyed a great rank in the sight of Allâh.

Islâm stands firmly against the manifold distortions which corrupted earlier religious dispensations, and vindicates the spiritual preceptors of all great religions. As such, it is a Muslim's duty to respond cogently to the accusations levelled against Prophet Moses^{as} in the US News and World Report article entitled, "Moses Unmasked" (1). This is one of a series of articles which betray limited appreciation for the spiritual reality of the Prophets. The Holy Qur'ân differs fundamentally from the Bible by its affirmation that the Prophets are those who articulate faith perfectly. Another meaning of the Arabic word *imân* is "faith"; those who possess faith cannot malign a Prophet because he articulates faith (Qur'ân 33:70). In any case, the purpose of this article is to present the Holy Qur'ân's vindication of Prophet Moses^{as}.

Kirsch's article flounders at the outset by presenting Moses^{as} as an example of errant humanity. He writes that this great religious teacher "lived a life marked with passions that are perfectly human...no less riddled with ambiguity and contradiction than any other human life" (2). The logical fallacy in this appraisal is immediately obvious. Kirsch's quotation from an eminent Biblical scholar, "There is nothing Divine about

Moses" (3), is soon contradicted by his own assertion that Christian theology regards Jesus^{as} as "the new Moses" (4). No such incongruity is permitted by the Holy Qur'ân. Prophets are unquestionably mortal, but Allâh chooses His Messengers from the most pure-hearted and noble of men. Their purpose is to manifest the reality of the Divine. Allâh Himself is Perfect, therefore logically the elect of God must themselves be unblemished (Qur'ân 10.17, 3.162). The Islamic concept of infallibility is fundamental to our notion of Prophethood. We do not learn the paths of spiritual advancement from those who are themselves corrupted. It is against this background that we should consider Islâm's portrayal of Prophet Moses^{as}.

In this article, we shall present the Holy Qur'ân's response to three Biblical allegations against the sanctity of Moses^{as}: Firstly, the supposedly flawed relationship between God and the Israelite Prophet, which Kirsch likens to a "cranky old couple in a bad marriage" (5). Secondly, we will refute the assertion that Moses^{as} promoted the slaughter of "wholly innocent men, women and children" (6). That is to say, the Bible both denigrates Moses's^{as} relationship with Allâh, and vilifies his relationship with his fellow humans. The third allegation is that the Israelite Prophet was a "magic-user" (7). In fact, the Holy Qur'ân's profound exposition of spiritual verities will be most appreciated in the "magic stories" of Moses^{as}.

An Emissary of God

Islâm presents Prophet Moses^{as} as one of the foremost Emissaries for God's Message, a Messenger in whose footsteps other Messengers followed (Qur'ân 2.88). The Holy Qur'an says that Allâh caused this

Prophet to draw near to Himself (Qur'ân 19.52-3). It should be remembered that the those who enjoy nearness to God are the foremost amongst the believers (Qur'ân 56.11-2). It is inconceivable that such a person should be in discord with the Divine Will. Islâm concurs with the Biblical narrative in the matter of Allâh's intimate relationship with Moses^{as} (Qur'ân 4.165), but the Holy Qur'ân denies antipathy between God and His Emissary. On the contrary, it endorses Prophet Moses's^{as} obedience to the Divine: "*My Lord, I have power over none but myself and my brother; therefore make Thou a distinction between us and the rebellious people*" (Qur'ân 5.26).

Kirsch's allegation that God "tried to murder" Moses^{as} [8] is also refuted by the Holy Qur'ân. Rather, Allâh promised him, "*the Messengers need have no fear in My presence*" (Qur'ân 27.11). For those endowed with wisdom, the Biblical portrayal of Allâh is perturbing. Exodus 4:24-6 relates that God endeavoured to kill Moses^{as}, only to be thwarted by the Prophet's wife Zipporah who used her son's foreskin to ward Him off. For a Muslim, such a tale offends the Majesty of the Divine. Islâm, by contrast, extols the Absolute Supremacy of Allâh: "*To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that dare intercede with Him save by His permission?*" (Qur'ân 2.256). The Holy Qur'ân asserts that the sun and the moon and the stars remain in obeisance to Allâh (Qur'ân 22.19), but the Bible asserts that a woman is able to thwart God's Will by means of her son's foreskin. Moreover, the idea that Allâh should desire to kill His faithful Emissary in the first instance is unthinkable for those who share the Islâmic concept of Allâh's Beneficence.

Allâh Himself is Perfect, therefore logically the elect of God must themselves be unblemished (Qur'ân 10.17, 3.162). The Islamic concept of infallibility is fundamental to our notion of Prophethood. We do not learn the paths of spiritual advancement from those who are themselves corrupted. It is against this background that we should consider Islâm's portrayal of Prophet Moses^{as}.



It is the magical powers of Prophet Moses^{as} which cause most confusion in the mind of the modern reader. For the purposes of this article, we shall focus on two prominent examples: The Serpent, and the White Hand. These in turn will shed light on the profound spiritual reality of this great Messenger.

The miracle of the Serpent is alluded to in Kirsch's article. He depicts the Prophet Moses^{as} as a sorcerer, who used his wooden staff as a "magic wand" (11). The Bible details these wizardly phenomena (Exodus 4.2-7, 7.10). A further miracle, mentioned also in the Holy Qur'ân, is when Prophet Moses^{as} placed his hand in his bosom and it turned white like snow (Exodus 4.6-8).

Perhaps the most impressive testament to Prophet Moses's^{as} perfect submission to Allâh's Will is found in his dispute with Pharaoh. The Holy Qur'ân emphasizes this story, as if to denounce the Bible's deprecation of God's Emissary. For the modern reader, it is difficult to conceive of the temporal power and authority enjoyed by Pharaoh at the time of the early Israelites. He was considered by his people to be no less than a god. Not only this, but Moses^{as} enjoyed a close relationship with Pharaoh and his family. Thus a protestation against Pharaoh was not only an act of immense courage, but also an undertaking that demanded considerable personal sacrifice. The Holy Qur'ân recounts that Prophet Moses^{as} did express concern that Pharaoh would kill him (Qur'ân 26.15), but he demurred no further on Allâh's reassurance. Islâm does not countenance Kirsch's Biblical folly that Prophet Moses^{as} was "perfectly willing to hector, cajole, and threaten [God] when the spirit moved him to do so" (9). Indeed, the Holy Qur'ân repeatedly describes his fearless challenge against one of the world's mightiest kings for this very purpose; it amply demonstrates an obedience to Allâh the likes of which has rarely been equalled in the annals of human history. Ever faithful to his trust, this great Messenger's words speak volumes at the extremity of Pharaoh's intimidation: "Nay," said (Moses), 'My Lord is with me. He will direct me aright.' " (Qur'ân 26.63).

Those who possess *imân* marvel at the vastness of resolve, fidelity and trust in Allâh evidenced by Prophet Moses^{as}. Undoubtedly, it is the Holy Qur'ân which restores the dignity of his position as God's stalwart servant. Few are those who have displayed faith like that of Moses^{as}.

A Benefactor of Humans

Kirsch's second calumny against Prophet Moses^{as} is that he was "already a man killer – he had murdered an Egyptian taskmaster in cold blood – and he would kill again with much greater ruthlessness and in vastly greater numbers" (10). His appraisal, which is rooted in the Biblical account, not only slanders the Israelite Prophet, but further gives license to those religious extremists who kill today in the name of religion. For both these reasons, the Qur'ânic narrative should be examined carefully.

The Holy Qur'ân relates that Prophet Moses^{as} did indeed cause the death of an

Egyptian. However, this was not an act of murder. Rather, the Israelite Prophet smote an Egyptian oppressor with one blow of his fist, which is not the methodology of one who intends the death of an opponent. Moses^{as} immediately regretted the Egyptian's unforeseen death (Qur'ân 28.16-22). Nevertheless, his action was in defence of an oppressed Israelite against a tyrannical Egyptian. It is inconceivable that Allâh should choose a common murderer as His Messenger to Pharaoh. The very purpose of Allâh was to admonish Pharaoh because he had transgressed all bounds (Qur'ân 20.44). Why then send a transgressor to warn against transgression? In fact, Moses^{as} himself protests thru prayer against the allegation that he committed murder: *"My Lord, deliver me from the unjust people"* (Qur'ân 28.22). That is to say, the Holy Qur'ân describes those who sought to punish him for the Egyptian's death as *zâlimîn* (unjust).

The Biblical paradox of the great Israelite lawgiver who taught, "Thou shalt not kill" and yet commanded wholesale slaughter of Jews after they worshipped a calf is also resolved by the Holy Qur'ân. Allâh says that He forgave the transgression of the calf-worshippers (Qur'ân 2.53), and Moses^{as} instructed them, "kill your egos" (Qur'ân 2.55). The profundity of the Arabic diction corrects misinterpretations found in previous scriptures. *Anfus* means "selves", and may be interpreted as an instruction to kill oneself physically; but in the context of repentance for a spiritual crime, these words advise the sinner to kill his ego and evil desires.

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'ân does not relate any instance of mass murder by Prophet Moses^{as}. In fact, Allâh sent the Israelite Prophet as a response to Pharaoh's injustice: *"And he and his hosts behaved arrogantly in the land, without any justification"* (Qur'ân 28.40). Therefore, the Israelite Prophet's mission was to oppose disorder and gratuitous bloodshed. The Qur'ân informs us of a people in the Holy Land who were *jabbârîn*, meaning that they domineered others by force and oppression. Prophet Moses^{as} instructed his people to enter the Holy Land, and they refused for fear of the powerful inhabitants therein (Qur'ân 5.22-7). There is no mention of Moses's^{as} alleged merciless post-Exodus decimation of Bashan and Midian. The Holy Qur'ân's purpose is not to recount history, but to offer spiritual

"O Moses, verily I am Allâh, the Lord of the worlds. And throw down thy rod". And when he saw it move as though it were a serpent, he turned back retreating and did not look back. "O Moses, come forward and fear not; surely, thou art of those who are safe." "Insert thy hand into thy bosom; it will come forth white without evil, and draw back thy arm toward thyself (in order to be free) from fear." (Qur'ân 28:31-33)

guidance. What we can safely say is that Allâh exhorts the believers to a high ethical code which denies any possibility of genocide by this great Israelite Prophet: *"And they were told, 'Eat and drink of what Allah has provided, and commit not iniquity in the earth, creating disorder'."* (Qur'ân 2.61). In fact, Allâh emphatically forbids murder in the verses which follow the instruction to enter the Holy Land: *"We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killed a person – unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land – it shall be as if he had killed all humankind"* (Qur'ân 5.33).

The Magic Stories

It is the magical powers of Prophet Moses^{as} which cause most confusion in the mind of the modern reader. For the purposes of this article, we shall focus on two prominent examples: The Serpent, and the White Hand. These in turn will shed light on the profound spiritual reality of this great Messenger.

The miracle of the Serpent is alluded to in Kirsch's article. He depicts the Prophet Moses^{as} as a sorcerer, who used his wooden staff as a "magic wand" (11). The Bible details these wizardly phenomena (Exodus 4.2-7, 7.10). A further miracle, mentioned also in the Holy Qur'ân, is when Prophet Moses^{as} placed his hand in his bosom and it turned white like snow (Exodus 4.6-8). These two Signs are given eminent importance by God in the Bible, and have long fascinated Muslim theologians. Many scholars take them as literal miracles, arguing that Allâh may break the physical laws which govern His universe. An

alternative understanding is that these two Signs convey a profound spiritual message for us today.

Allâh first revealed these Signs to Prophet Moses^{as} alone:

(Allâh) said, "Cast it (your wooden staff) down, O Moses". So he cast it down, and behold! it was "hayyatun tas'â" (a serpent running). He said, "Catch hold of it and fear not. We shall restore it to its former condition;

And draw thy hand closer under thy armpit, it shall come forth white, without any disease – another Sign." (Qur'ân 20:20-23)

"O Moses, verily I am Allâh, the Lord of the worlds. And throw down thy rod". And when he saw it move as though it were a serpent, he turned back retreating and did not look back. "O Moses, come forward and fear not; surely, thou art of those who are safe." "Insert thy hand into thy bosom; it will come forth white without evil, and draw back thy arm toward thyself (in order to be free) from fear." (Qur'ân 28:31-33)

Then after this, Prophet Moses^{as} showed the Signs to Pharaoh:

So he flung down his rod, and behold! it was a serpent plainly visible. And he drew forth his hand, and lo! it was white for the beholders. (Qur'ân 7:108-9)

Then we read a further development, in the contest between Moses^{as} and the magicians:

Then Moses threw down his rod and lo! it swallowed up (all) that they had fabricated. (Qur'ân 26:46)

Many Muslims mistakenly take these descriptions as literal physical events, because Allâh says the serpent was manifest.

Also they ask why Moses^{as} was afraid, if it did not happen literally. However, these descriptions refer to visionary experiences shared by Prophet Moses^{as} and others. Such visionary experiences are well-established in religious history. Qur'ân 54:2 and Sâhih Bukhârî tell us that the Moon was broken in two pieces, as witnessed by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and also some disbelievers (12). Again there are narrations that once the companions saw the angel Gabriel when he visited Prophet Muhammad^{sa} (13).

Thus does Allâh grant visionary experiences *en masse*, and these experiences invariably carry a deeper message. For instance, the splitting of the Moon portended the destruction of Arab society and the old world-order with the advent of Islâm. The fact that Allâh describes Himself as “*The Mighty, The Wise*” (Qur'ân 27:10) before revealing the Signs to Moses^{as} also suggests that these Signs were not a mere conjuring trick. The important question for us is: what is their significance?

In this regard, we should understand that visionary experiences and divine dreams are communicated by imagery which carries special meanings; Allâh taught these meanings to Prophet Joseph^{as} (Qur'ân 12:7). In the language of dreams, a rod means a kingdom or community; a serpent commonly signifies an enemy.

Therefore Moses^{as} was shown in these visions that if he cast his community away, then it was like a serpent or enemy. Allâh told him to take hold of his enemy and draw it close, saying, “*Catch hold of it and fear not. We shall restore it to its former condition*” (Qur'ân 20:22).

Many Muslims wonder why Moses^{as} was afraid if this was not a literal physical event. In fact, Moses^{as} was fearful not only of the vision's intensity, but he was deeply worried by the vision's significance: that his own community could turn into God's enemy. However, Allâh advised him not to fear, and instead Allâh promised Moses^{as} that if he took hold of his community and drew it close to himself, then Allâh would restore it to “its former condition” of righteousness. This also carries a cardinal message for every Muslim today. As long as we stay close to our Messenger, we shall remain a strong rod (community). By abandoning our Messenger, we are transformed into a serpent (God's enemy).

Interestingly, Allâh uses three different words which translate as “serpent”. There is no caprice in the linguistics of the Holy

Qur'ân; each of these words conveys guidance:

■ *Hayya* describes all categories of serpents; the Arabic root-word *Hayy* means “living”. This word is used when Allâh first showed the Sign to Moses^{as} exclusively (Qur'ân 20:21).

■ *Jânn* means a small, quick-moving serpent. Again, this word is used in early descriptions, when Moses^{as} alone saw the Sign (Qur'ân 28:32, 27:11).

■ *Thu'bân* means a large bulky serpent, which was shown to Pharaoh and others (Qur'ân 7:108, 26:34).

Therefore, this was a prophecy that the Israelites, who were a dead nation under Pharaoh, would enjoy spiritual vigour through Moses^{as} as a living *Hayya*, and then from a small decadent *Jânn* they would rapidly progress to a large bulky *Thu'bân*. It was shown as *Thu'bân* to Pharaoh, in order to warn Pharaoh that his tyranny would fail to impede the growth of the Israelite nation.

The most important message of this Sign is universal and not restricted to the Israelites: whether small or large, the community should remain close to their Messenger, rather than distance themselves and become the enemy of God. In fact, these verses may signify that the future Israelite nation, whether small or powerful, would act as a serpent and enemy of God. Naturally, this prophecy made Moses^{as} afraid and he wished to turn away from leading such a people. This was the basis of his fear; not a conjuring trick.

The other Sign of Moses^{as} is that he put his hand under his arm-pit, and withdrew it white and *ghairi sûin* (without disease).

Arabic is a language of poetic wealth. For instance, the word *yad* which is translated as “hand”, is also used figuratively to mean: bounty, dominion, protection, army, community. As one of the meanings of *yad* is “community”, this Sign may be interpreted as a promise to Moses^{as} and his people that their close inter-relationship would remove (spiritual) disease. The message is aptly twinned with the Sign of the Serpent, and for this reason these Signs are mentioned together. The serpent warned against spiritual corruption if the community distanced itself from the Messenger, and the white hand gave glad tidings of spiritual purification by proximity to the Messenger.

Finally, the contest between Prophet Moses^{as} and Pharaoh's magicians is also widely misunderstood. Careful perusal of

Qur'ân 7:117-118 and 26:45-46 reveals that the magicians threw, and Moses's^{as} rod (not a serpent) swallowed “whatever they fabricated”. Evidently, this is not speaking of physical realities. The word “fabricated” suggests that the creation of the magicians was not a physical reality. Nor does a rod possess a mouth and digestive system that it should swallow something literally. On contemplation, this incident recommends that the believers act as the Messenger's rod (community). The serpent may seem rapid and powerful, but only by remaining close to the Messenger as his rod do we possess power to swallow the fabrications of those who oppose Allâh.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Moses^{as} was the beloved of Allâh and he in turn loved Allâh with the ardour of a true devotee. Not only this, but he opposed tyranny and he himself always acted with justice. The Holy Qur'ân presents Moses^{as} as a pure-hearted servant of God, and a benefactor of his fellow humans. Furthermore, the Signs of Moses^{as} are not conjuring tricks of antiquity, but they are Signs from the Mighty, the Wise; and they provide guidance for the believers today. u

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In every instance she is mentioned, the Qur'an speaks of her with benevolence. In fact, Mary^{ra} is one of just two women who are specifically mentioned in the Qur'an for their piety – the other being the wife of Pharaoh, surrogate mother of Prophet Moses^{as}.



The life of Mary, according to the Holy Qur'an

By Naveed Malik

As with other pious figures in the history of religion, whose good names had been sullied by pre-Islamic traditions, God instructs Muslims to:

"Recite the account of Mary according to this Book..." (Qur'an 19:17)

Thus, in accordance with Divine command, we now recount the story of Mary^{ra}, as related by the Holy Qur'an. It may surprise readers to learn that the Qur'anic account of Mary^{ra} is not brief by any means. She is mentioned more than 30 times in Islam's sacred scripture and even serves as the namesake for its 19th chapter, *Maryam*. So enlightening is the Qur'anic account of her life, Allah the Exalted states:

"This is of the tidings of things unseen which We reveal to thee." (3:45)

Commenting on this description of Mary's account in the Qur'an, *Khalifatul Masih II* [1] Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} writes:

"Many of the facts which the Qur'an has brought to light regarding Mary are not found in the previous scriptures. Hence, they are here spoken of as 'things unseen'." (p. 393)

In every instance she is mentioned, the Qur'an speaks of her with benevolence. In fact, Mary^{ra} is one of just two women who are specifically mentioned in the Qur'an for

their piety – the other being the wife of Pharaoh, surrogate mother of Prophet Moses^{as}.

Lineage

Her story begins with Hanna and Imran. While the Qur'an does not specifically name Mary's mother, historical records and Judeo-Christian scriptures relate that her name was Hanna,[2] she belonged to the House of Aaron and was the cousin of Elisabeth^{ra}, wife of Zachariah^{as} (Luke 1:5, 36). Concerning her father, Mary^{ra} is addressed in a verse of the Qur'an as "Daughter of Imran" (66:13), which merits a brief explanation. Most scholars believe that this is a figurative reference to the biblical Amram (Imran in Arabic), who was the father of Moses^{as} and Aaron^{as}. This is logical as the Israelites commonly addressed men and women with reference to their lineage or ancestry, and indeed Mary^{ra} was an Israelite, and a descendant of Amram. There is, however, a *hadith* [3] (saying of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}) which relates Mary's own father was also named Imran.[4]

Just over two thousand years ago, Hanna and Imran, husband and wife, were expecting a child. The Qur'an relates that Hanna thought her child would be a boy. Reflecting her own pious nature, and that of her husband's, she dedicated him to a life in the service of God (3:36). As such, when her son would grow old enough, he would be sent to live at the

temple, to be then raised by the rabbis. Husband and wife were eager indeed to earn the pleasure of God by devoting their son to a life of piety.

A Girl is Born

Hanna did not, however, give birth to a son. The Qur'an relates:

"But when she was delivered of it, she said, 'My Lord, I am delivered of a female,' – and Allah knew best what she brought forth and the male she was thinking of was not like the female she had brought forth – 'and I have named her Mary, and I commit her and her offspring to Thy protection from Satan, the rejected'." (3:37)

Though her child was born a girl, Hanna remained resolute in her promise to God, and dedicated her "and her offspring" to the service of Allah the Exalted. Commenting on the name Mary, *Khalifatul Masih II* writes:

"The clause 'I have named her Mary,' contained an implied prayer to God to make the girl as exalted and as good and as virtuous as the name Mary, meaning exalted or a pious worshipper, signified." (p. 386)

The Qur'an continues:

"So her Lord accepted her (Mary) with

gracious acceptance and caused her to grow an excellent growth and made Zachariah her guardian.” (3:38)

Zachariah and his Inspiration

The Qur’an relates Zachariah^{as} was a prophet of God, and a contemporary of Mary^{ra}. [5] As her mother had dedicated Mary^{ra} to the service of God, Zachariah^{as}, a pious rabbi and Mary’s^{ra} uncle, [6] was given charge of her spiritual training, though her own mother and father were still alive.

The Qur’an relates that Zachariah^{as} appeared to be so impressed with the pious nature of Mary^{ra} that in his old age, he supplicated God to grant him a child. Allah responded, “Zachariah, we give thee glad tidings of a son who shall grow up to maturity and whose name shall be Yahya (John)” (19:8).

Thus, Zachariah^{as} was not only a prophet of God and the guardian and uncle of Mary^{ra}, but also the father of John^{as}; a young man who would grow up to become a prophet and serve as the figurative return of Prophet Elijah^{as}, which, according to traditions of the Israelites, was a precursor to the advent of the Messiah. Indeed Prophet Jesus^{as} made that very claim, as recorded in the Bible (Matt. 17:12).

An Excellent Growth

Mary^{ra} did indeed have an excellent upbringing. The Holy Qur’an shows that from the very beginning, young Mary^{ra} expressed a deep appreciation to God for all that she had. We read:

“Whenever Zachariah visited her in the chamber, he found with her provisions. He said, ‘O Mary whence hast thou this?’ She replied, ‘It is from Allah.’ Surely, Allah gives to whomsoever He pleases without measure” (3:38).

We thus see that from her childhood Mary was beholden to God; an inspiration to young and old alike.

Miracle of Motherhood

Mary^{ra} was already well known for her religious learning and outstanding moral character and had now attained adulthood. Even before her birth she had received the support of God, Who had heard and answered her prayers; but now, an even greater phenomenon occurred: she was visited by angels, with direct revelation from God. The Qur’an relates:

“And remember when the angels said, ‘O Mary, Allah has chosen thee and purified thee and chosen thee above all women of the time’.” (3:43)

The angels affirmed to her what the people had already come to know. Certainly this revelation was cause for joy, but with it a question must have come to the mind of Mary^{ra}: exactly what had she been chosen for? The angels then brought news from God that answered this question, to the bewilderment of the chaste and unmarried virgin.

She was about to become a mother.

The Qur’an relates:

“When the angels said, ‘O Mary, Allah gives thee glad tidings of a son through a Word from Him; his name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honored in this world and in the next, and of those who are granted nearness to God’.” (3:45)

The incident is described in further detail in Chapter 19, *Maryam*, where it is written of Mary^{ra}:

“...She withdrew from her people to an eastern place; And screened herself off from them. Then We sent Our angel to her and he appeared to her in the form of a well-proportioned man.” (19:18-18).

Simultaneously reflecting her profound modesty and complete faith in God, the

Qur’an relates:

“She said, ‘I seek refuge with the Gracious God from thee if indeed thou dost fear Him.’ The angel said, ‘I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may give thee glad tidings of a righteous son’ ” (19:19-20).

The gift and responsibility of motherhood is serious enough under normal circumstances. Imagine then, being chosen by God to be the mother of a baby who has been appointed the long-expected messiah for the lost tribes of the House of Israel – a prophet of God. Notwithstanding the tremendous responsibility with which she had just been entrusted, the obvious dilemma that occurred to Mary^{ra} was that she was a chaste, unmarried woman. How then could she become a mother? Accordingly, the Qur’an states,

“She said, ‘How can I have a son when no man has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?’ The angel said, ‘Thus it shall be.’ But says thy Lord, ‘It is easy for Me; and We shall do so that We may make him a Sign unto men, and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing decreed’.” (19:21-22)

In an additional explanation to her query, God Almighty elucidated,

“Such is the way of Allah. He creates what He pleases. When He decrees a thing, He says to it ‘Be,’ and it is.” (3:48)

Thus, with just one word from God, virgin Mary^{ra} was now an expecting mother. The Qur’an relates:

“So she conceived him, and withdrew to a remote place.[7] And the pains of child-birth drove her unto the trunk of a palm tree. She said, ‘O, would that I had died before this and had become a thing quite forgotten!’ ” (19:23-24).

Mary’s^{ra} heart wrenching pain appealed to Allah’s sense of compassion. It is hence

Mary^{ra} did indeed have an excellent upbringing. The Holy Qur’an shows that from the very beginning, young Mary^{ra} expressed a deep appreciation to God for all that she had. We read: “Whenever Zachariah visited her in the chamber, he found with her provisions. He said, ‘O Mary whence hast thou this?’ She replied, ‘It is from Allah.’ Surely, Allah gives to whomsoever He pleases without measure.” (3:38)

written:

"Then an angel called her from beneath her, saying 'Grieve not. Thy Lord has placed a rivulet below thee; and shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will drop upon thee fresh ripe dates; so, eat and drink and cool thine eye. And if thou seest any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to the Gracious God; I will, therefore, not speak this day to any human being'." (19:25-27)

Mary^{ra} soon gave birth to her son in Bethlehem. Now wedded to Joseph^{ra}, the two raised Jesus^{as} together. By Divine design, one of the meanings of the Arabic *Isa* (Jesus) is "traveler." We read:

"It appears from the Gospels that after Jesus' birth at Bethlehem, in pursuance of a Divine command, Joseph had taken him and Mary to Egypt where they lived for some years and it was after the death of Herod that the family came back to Nazareth and dwelt there (Matt. 2:13-23)" (Ahmad, Mirza B. M., p. 1578).

The Journey Home

Many years later, the time had come for Jesus^{as} to begin his ministry. As prophesized the Messiah arrived in the holy land mounted, and as always, his mother was by his side. We read:

"Then she brought him to her people, mounted. They said, 'O Mary, surely thou hast committed a monstrous thing! O sister of Aaron, thy father was not a wicked man, nor was thy mother an unchaste woman!' " (19:27-28).

Commenting on the original Arabic text of these verses, Khalifatul Masih II explains:

"'Fariyy' also means, a forger of lies (Lane). By using this [Arabic] word, the elders of the Jews insinuated that Mary was a bad woman and Jesus a forger of lies and a false prophet. Mary has been here called the sister of Aaron and not that of Moses though both were brothers, for, whereas Moses was the founder of the Jewish Law, Aaron was the head of the Jewish priestly class ("Encyclopaedia Biblica" & "Encyclopedia Britannica" under 'Aaron'), and Mary belonged to the priestly order" (Farid p. 610).

The Israelites who refused to accept her message claimed that Mary^{ra}, then an



Mary^{ra} watched helplessly as her son was sentenced to crucifixion. The suffering a mother feels when her child is in pain can be as much, if not more, than the pain of her child. Think then of Mary's^{ra} anguish as she watched soldiers torture her son and nail him to the cross. Yet Mary^{ra} endured the ordeal bravely, remaining ever prayerful and steadfast.

unmarried woman, became pregnant through an illicit relationship with a man (God forbid). Allah, the Lord of Honor and Glory, calls this baseless allegation "a grievous calumny," which, along with numerous other moral infractions by the Israelites, led God to bar them from the enjoyment of His spiritual favors which had been previously allowed to them (4:156-162). Furthermore, it is this very attack against her virtuous character by the Israelites, vis-à-vis the birth of baby Jesus^{as}, which led God to reveal the true account of the miraculous birth, and issue the Qur'anic injunction to relate the account of Mary^{ra} according to *this* Book.

Opposition Mounts

Three years into his ministry at Jerusalem, people had begun to accept the message of Jesus^{as}. Comical indifference transformed into violent opposition. It was at this point that his enemies took secretive measures to stop his movement indefinitely.

Crucifixion and Beyond

While Jewish, Christian and Muslim

accounts agree to *some* degree up until this moment in history, once the crucifixion takes place, these accounts take drastically divergent turns. Jewish history argues he died and was buried; Christian accounts argue he died, but was resurrected and physically raised to heaven. Islam's account, neither underground nor in the clouds, is firmly grounded. Being an Islamic account of Mary's^{ra} life, we shall present here just a brief summary of these events, which have been given lengthier treatment in the cited works.

This controversial account of history begins with a point of unanimous agreement: Jesus^{as} was indeed placed on the cross. Mary^{ra} watched helplessly as her son was sentenced to crucifixion. The suffering a mother feels when her child is in pain can be as much, if not more, than the pain of her child. Think then of Mary's^{ra} anguish as she watched soldiers torture her son and nail him to the cross. Yet Mary^{ra} endured the ordeal bravely, remaining ever prayerful and steadfast.

The Qur'an relates the story of the crucifixion, teaching that Jesus^{as} in fact survived the ordeal.[8] He then fled from Jerusalem, where just two of the 12 tribes – to whom he was sent – dwelled. A small

party, including companion Thomas^{ra} and mother Mary^{ra}, emigrated with him. Jesus^{as}, true to his name, spent a lifetime traveling and preaching; a lifetime in which, by the Grace of Allah, his message reached all 12 tribes of Israel. History clearly shows that these original 12 tribes reached as far east as the Indian subcontinent, which is where Jesus^{as} and Mary^{ra} ultimately settled (Ahmad, *Jesus in India*).

“And We made the son of Mary and his mother a Sign, and gave them shelter on an elevated land of green valleys and springs of running water.” (23:51)

This physical description corresponds exactly to lands within the borders of modern day Pakistan and India. Religious scholar and notable World Bank economist, the late M. M. Ahmad recounts:

“Jesus, his mother Mary, and Thomas proceeded towards Murree also in Pakistan” (Ahmad, M. M.).

It was here that the most pious and perfect woman of her age, Mary mother of Jesus, may Allah be pleased with her, passed away. Accordingly, M. M. Ahmad writes:

“Mary died there and was buried at a hill top known as Pindi-Point. The town Murree was until 1875 called Mari and, was named after her. Her tomb adjoining the Defense Tower is even today called: Mai Mari da Asthan - the resting place of Mother Mary.”

Mary in the Eyes of Allah

In its infallible words, the Holy Qur'an describes Mary^{ra} as “a paragon of truth,” (5:76) who “guarded her chastity,” (21:92) and was “chosen” (3:43) by God; “obedient,” (66:13) “favored,” (5:111) “purified,” (3:43) and indeed “chosen above all women of the time” (3:43). She served as “a Sign” (23:51) of God and “fulfilled the prophecy conveyed to her in the words of her Lord contained in His Books” (66:13).

A greater Qur'anic chronicle of a virtuous woman does not exist. Indeed, one is hard pressed to present a more sublime paradigm of womanhood in the entire history of civilization. Mary's^{ra} shining example of piety remains preserved in the Holy Qur'an for all time, giving not just women, but – as in her

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(Ahmad, *Jesus in India*)

lifetime – men an inspiring exemplar of virtue and faithfulness. May Allah be pleased with our beloved Mary, a woman who inspired prophets of God, and shower His most special blessings upon her, and give Muslims the ability and desire to recite her astonishing account to the entire world, Amen. ♦

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(Endnotes)

1 Translation: Successor of the Messiah; title of the elected Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} was elected to this lifelong office in 1914, serving until his passing in 1965.

2 Refer to Volume 1 of the 5-volume commentary of the Holy Qur'an for further details.

3 Commentary of the Qur'an by Imam Bu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, and the Tafsir of Abu'l Fida Isma'il Ibn al-Kathir

4 “The fact that Hanna's husband, or for that matter Mary's father, has been named Joachim in the Christian scriptures (Gospel of the Birth of Mary and the Enc. Brit. under Mary) should not perplex us as Joachim is the same as Yoshim mentioned by Ibn Jarir as the father of Imran. The Christian scriptures give the name of the grandfather instead of the father, which is not an uncommon practice.” (Ahmad, p. 385)

5 Zachariah or Zacharias is referred to as a priest by Christian traditions (Luke 1:5), whereas the Qur'an declares him a prophet. He should not be confused with the Biblical prophet Zechariah (note the spelling difference), mentioned in the Book Zechariah 1:1.

6 As previously mentioned, Hanna, mother of Mary^{ra}, and Elisabeth^{ra}, wife of Zachariah^{as}, were cousins. Elisabeth^{ra} was thus Mary's^{ra} aunt, and her husband, Zachariah^{as}, was her uncle.

7 “The words, ‘a remote place’ refer to Bethlehem, which is about seventy miles from Nazareth, to the south. There Joseph took Mary sometime before Jesus' birth, which took place in that town.” (Five Volume Commentary of the Holy Qur'an, Vol. IV, p. 1572)

8 Another widely held Muslim belief – to which the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community does not subscribe – is that Jesus Christ was never crucified; rather, God deceived everyone by placing someone who resembled him on the cross and physically raised Jesus Christ to Himself. This account receives no support whatsoever from Christian, Jewish, Qur'anic or secular historical accounts.

By Falahud Din Shams

The Christian West presents the view that Jesus is the physically begotten Son of God. This view, in fact, is a result of their Greco-Roman heritage and its pagan undertones. Of course, in accepting him as the Son of God, he must be worshipped. Another essential belief is that Jesus was accursed of God because he was put on the cross and died there. The Bible says, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galations 3:13). Christians allege that Jesus carried the curse of all sins as he was sacrificed for their salvation. In commemoration of this, Christians symbolically drink the blood of Jesus and eat his flesh in order to partake in this alleged sacrifice he made to atone for their sins.

Jesus is exonerated from these allegations in the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran removed many misconceptions about Jesus and declared that he did not die on the cross as it was the fate of a false prophet. Although his enemies tried to disgrace him through crucifixion, the Quran upholds his claim that he was a true messenger of God.

Besides removing these misconceptions, the Holy Quran restored the proper respect of Jesus

JESUS Son of Mary

as a holy prophet and a messenger. Furthermore, in order to remove all other doubts and man-made dogmas, the Holy Quran described and revealed the true status of Jesus.

Let us first look at some of the misconceptions that have been removed by the Holy Quran concerning Jesus. The most severe misconception about Jesus is that he was accursed of God which makes him an enemy of God; Just as Satan has been declared accursed being the enemy of God. The Holy Quran declared:

"And their saying 'we did kill the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah', whereas they slew him not, nor killed him by crucifixion, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it; they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture, and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty." (4:158)

The above passage clearly declared that the enemies of Jesus failed to ensure Jesus' death. This uncertainty prohibits them from declaring Jesus as accursed of God.

Not only did the Holy Quran remove the major misconception about his being cursed, but minor details were clarified.

The commandment was given, "Honor thy father and thy mother", but it appears from John 2:3-4 that Jesus showed disrespect towards his mother by rebuking her, "Woman, what do I have to do with thee." The Holy Quran did not tolerate even this small blemish against Jesus. The Holy Quran declared in chapter 19, verses 31 to 33:

"Jesus said, I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the book and made me a prophet. And He made me blessed wheresoever I may be and has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I live.

And he has made me dutiful towards my mother and He has not made me haughty and unblessed."

Not only did God describe Jesus as dutiful to his mother, but He stated that it was a blessing given to him by God Himself. So how can anyone believe that he behaved improperly with his mother? Once again God stepped in Himself through the Holy Quran and removed the misconception about His prophet Jesus.

Once the misconceptions about Jesus are removed, the question arises what was he, what was his true status and what were his claims. The Holy Quran announced the true position of Jesus. In chapter 5, we read:

“Indeed they are disbelievers who say, ‘Surely Allah is none but the Messiah son of Mary’. Whereas the Messiah himself said: ‘O Children of Israel, worship Allah who is my Lord and your Lord.’ Surely whoso associates partners with Allah, him has Allah forbidden Heaven and the Fire will be his resort.”

“They are surely disbelievers who say, ‘Allah is third of three.’ There is no god but the one God. And if they do not desist from what they say, a grievous punishment shall certainly befall those of them who disbelieve.”

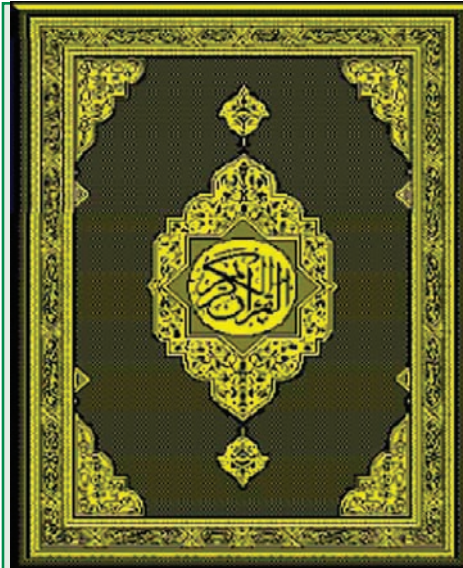
“The Messiah son of Mary was only a messenger. Surely messengers like unto him had indeed passed away before him. And his mother was a righteous woman. They both used to eat food. See how We explain the signs for their good and see how they are turned away.”

“Say will you worship beside Allah that which has no power to do you harm or good? And it is Allah who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”

“Say, O people of the Book, exceed not the limits in the matter of your religion unjustly, nor follow the evil inclinations of the people who went astray before and caused many to go astray and who have strayed away from the right path.” (5:73-78)

The above passages reflect the following points about the true position and status of Jesus:

1. **Jesus never claimed to be God.**
2. **On the contrary, he preached that there was only one God whom we serve and worship.**



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“The Messiah son of Mary was only a messenger. Surely messengers like unto him had indeed passed away before him. And his mother was a righteous woman. They both used to eat food. See how We explain the signs for their good and see how they are turned away.”

3. **Jesus was a prophet and a messenger of God. He was just like the prophets who were before him. As**

it was not done in the past, God Himself did not come but sent one of His prophets to deliver the message.

4. **Jesus was born of a woman, a righteous woman. He could not be the begotten Son of God because his mother was a human being who gave him birth. So was her child a human.**
5. **Jesus and his mother used to eat food. This shows that they were not free of human needs but were subject to nature’s rules as the other humans. They needed to eat food for nourishment and therefore, God being a person subjected to all human bodily changes is an irrational belief.**
6. **Jesus being a human was weak. He could do no harm to anybody but himself.**
7. **Dogmas like the Trinity and that Jesus was God are inventions of the people who strayed from his teachings. As was quoted earlier, it took these people a few centuries before implementing such inventions in the religion Jesus brought.**

All of the above propositions set forth by the Holy Quran can be validated by the Gospels, in the same sequence:

1. **Nowhere in the Gospels, Jesus declared to be God in a literal context.**
2. **According to Mathew 4:10, Jesus preached worship of only one God. He said, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”**

3. **He was known to be a prophet. According to Matthew 21:11, when he went to Jerusalem, the multitude said, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." He was also called prophet many other places such as Matthew 13:57, Luke 13:33, Luke 24:19 and John 6:14. In essence, he has been called a prophet in all the Gospels.**
4. **The fourth proposition that he was born of a woman is believed by all Christians and is confirmed by the Gospels that Mary was his mother.**
5. **According to the Gospels, Jesus used to eat food. Matthew 11:19 says, "The son of man came eating and drinking". Luke 24:43 says, "they him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them."**
6. **Gospels attest the fact that he was a weak being. It is written in Mark 14:36 and John 5:30 that he does not do anything by himself and prayed to God for help.**
7. **There is no emulation of the cross, the "sacrifice", or of Jesus beyond prophethood in the four Gospels. These were institutionalized centuries later and originated by St. Paul, who neither saw Jesus nor was his disciple.**

I would like to discuss in some detail how the statement of the Holy Quran about Trinity and cross-worship being a later addition is traced in the New Testament and the early history of Christianity.

During his lifetime, Jesus always

preached to the Jews and instructed his disciples to exclusively preach to the Jews. He commanded his disciple, "Go not in the way of Gentiles" (Matt 10:5), and "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you" (Matt 7:6).

The post-crucifixion period was a difficult time for the disciples. Their preaching to Jews was unsuccessful because Jesus was declared accursed by hanging on the cross, yet they were unable to preach to the Gentiles because of open orders from their beloved master Jesus. In these disappointing circumstances, arose a man named Saul who later became known as St. Paul. He, not being one of the disciples, self-proclaimed his authority as an apostle based on visions he claimed to have experienced. At that point, this self-made apostle determined to do exactly what was prohibited by Jesus - preaching to the Gentiles. Three years after Jesus' persecution, St. Paul met the disciples Peter and James and tried to persuade them that they must preach to the Gentiles. The disciples tried to convince him not to do that. He claimed that Jesus himself commanded him in a vision while staying in Jerusalem to do so in these words, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they (the Jews) will not receive thy testimony concerning me... Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (The Acts 22:18 to 21).

This was the first fundamental deviation from the commandments of Jesus that resulted in the Christian corruption referred to in the Holy Quran. In order to preach to the Gentiles, St. Paul had to make certain allowances for them. In many cases he went to the extreme of abolishing the Mosaic Law, which served as the foundation of Jesus' teachings. For example, Paul states, "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24 to 25).

Of all statements in the Holy Quran describing the true position of Jesus, the most important states that he was not God and therefore should not be worshipped. As this is the root of modern day Christianity, it deserves careful consideration. It is such a fierceful monstrosity to assign Divinity to a human being that one shudders after thinking how it invokes the anger of God. In the Holy Quran God has

displayed his anger in the following verses:

"And they say, 'The Merciful God has taken unto Himself a son.' Assuredly, you have indeed uttered a most hideous thing. The heavens might well-nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and mountains fall down in pieces. Because they ascribe a son to the Gracious God. It becomes not the Gracious God to beget a son. Verily there is none in the heavens and in the earth but shall approach the Gracious God as a servant." (19:89 to 94)

It is a miracle of the Holy Quran that God restored honor and dignity to this prophet of His, Jesus son of Mary. The Quran declares Jesus close to God, and exalted by God Himself. The Holy Quran establishes that Jesus was a prophet sent to call people to worship one God. It bears witness that Jesus fulfilled his mission for which he was sent. In following verses, it was clearly announced that Jesus followed the instruction of God until his death. In Chapter 5, verse 118, we read:

"I (Jesus) said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me: 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them. But since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the watcher over them, and Thou art Witness over all things. If Thou punish them, they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, Thou surely art the Mighty, the Wise."

How beautiful is the manner in which God has exonerated Jesus of any wrongdoing attributed to him! How beautiful is the manner in which God has restored dignity of Jesus that rightfully belonged to him! How beautiful is the manner in which God has refuted all those who claim that Jesus professed to be God!

The Holy Quran, in numerous other places, has announced to the world that God sent Jesus as His prophet. God loved him much, spoke to him abundantly, heard his prayers and gave him many signs and clear proofs in support of his truth. God gave him wisdom and knowledge of the Book and a teaching that was light and guidance for the people. Jesus holds a status that God only gives to a few - to whomsoever He pleases. ♦



Jesus in India

An escape from death on the cross and a journey to India

By Naser-ud-Din Shams

One of the revolutionary ideas brought forth by the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, was that Jesus^{as} did not die upon the cross. This challenges the very foundations of modern day Judaism and Christianity. Simply put, if Jesus^{as} did not die upon the cross, he could not be an accursed false prophet (Deut 21:22-23 & Gal 3:13). This forces Judaism to reconsider him as the anticipated Messiah, and questions the Christian concept of salvation.

In accordance with his revelations, Ahmad^{as} stated that subsequent to the crucifixion, Jesus^{as} traveled to India where he eventually died and was buried. In fact, Ahmad^{as} pointed out his tomb in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Ahmad^{as} proved his theory with verses in the Holy Qur'an and evidence from external and independent sources. The independent evidence he cited includes the Bible, books of history, medical texts, and Buddhist and Hindu scriptures.

Biblical Evidence

In the first chapter of his book *Jesus in India*, Ahmad^{as} bases his evidence directly from the Bible itself:

"Let it be noted that though Christians believe that Jesus (peace be on him) after his arrest through the betrayal by Judas Iscariot, and crucifixion — and resurrection — went to heaven, yet, from the Holy Bible, it appears that this belief of theirs is altogether wrong. Matthew (chapter 12, verse 40) says that just

as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth. Now it is clear that Jonah did not die in the belly of the fish; the utmost that happened was that he was in a swoon or a fit of fainting. The holy books of God bear witness that Jonah, by the grace of God, remained alive in the belly of the fish, and came out alive; and his people ultimately accepted him. If then Jesus (on whom be peace) had died in the belly of the 'fish', what resemblance could there be between a dead man and the one who was alive, and how could a living one be compared with one dead? The truth rather is, that as Jesus was a true prophet and as he knew that God, whose beloved he was, would save him from an accursed death, he made a prophecy in the form

of a parable, revealed to him by God, in which he hinted that he would not die on the Cross, nor would he give up the ghost on the accursed wood; on the contrary, like the prophet Jonah, he would only pass through a state of swoon. In the parable he had also hinted that he would come out of the bowels of the earth and would then join the people and, like Jonah, would be honored by them. So this prophecy too was fulfilled; for Jesus, coming out of the bowels of the earth, went to his tribes who lived in the eastern countries, Kashmir and Tibet, etc. viz. the ten tribes of the Israelites who 721 years before Jesus, had been taken prisoner from Samaria by Shalmaneser, King of Assur, and had been taken away by him. Ultimately, these tribes came to India and settled in various parts of that country.”

Ahmad also points out the significance of incidents which appear interesting, but may be overlooked as irrelevant. He explains the role of the dream of Pilate’s wife, the limited duration of the crucifixion, failure to break the legs of Jesus^{as}, the spear wound from which flowed blood and water, and the raising of the saints from their graves. These were sequential events in a Plan by God to save His messenger Jesus^{as} from the plots of his enemies.

Medical Texts

Ahmad^{as} also cites evidence from medical texts in chapter three:

“A piece of evidence of great value with regard to the escape of Jesus from the Cross, which no one can help admitting, is a medical preparation known as *Marham-i-Isa* or the ‘Ointment of Jesus’ recorded in hundreds of medical books. Some of these books were compiled by Christians, some by Magians or Jews, some by Muslims. Most of them are very old. Investigations show that in the beginning the preparation came to be known as an oral tradition among hundreds of thousands of people. Then they recorded it. At first, in the very time of Jesus, a little after the event of the Cross, a pharmaceutical work was compiled in Latin, in which there was a mention of this preparation along with the statement that the preparation had been prepared for the wounds of Jesus. Next, this work was translated into several languages, until, in the time of Mamun-al-Rashid, it was translated into Arabic. It is, moreover, a strange result of divine intervention that eminent physicians of all religions — Christian, Jew, Magian, or Muslim — have all mentioned this preparation in their

books, and have stated that it was prepared for Jesus by the disciples. A study of books on pharmacology shows that this preparation is very useful in cases of injuries due to blows or falls, arresting immediately the flow of blood; and as it also contains ‘myrrh’ the wound remains aseptic. The ointment is also useful in plague; it is good for boils and ulcers of all kinds.”

Ahmad^{as} lists 33 examples of medical texts which mention the “Ointment of Jesus,” including the famous *Qanun* by Ibn Sina (980-1037AD). This work was revered in Europe as the standard medical text for nearly five centuries.

Buddhist Scriptures

In Chapter four, Ahmad^{as} points out the striking similarities between Buddhist and Christian teachings:

“...there is such a striking resemblance between the moral teaching of the Buddha and that of Jesus, that for those acquainted with both it has become something surprising. For example, the Gospels say: do not resist evil, love your enemy, live in poverty, shun pride and falsehood and greed. The same is the teaching of the Buddha. Nay, the Buddhist teaching lays greater stress on it, so much so that the killing even of ants and insects has been declared a sin. The outstanding principle of Buddhism is: sympathy for the whole world; seeking the welfare of the whole of humanity and of all the animals; promotion of a spirit of unity and mutual love. The same is the gospel teaching. Again, just as Jesus sent his disciples to different countries — journeying to one himself — so was the case with the Buddha. *Buddhism* by Sir Monier Monier Williams records that the Buddha sent out his disciples to preach, addressing them thus: ‘Go forth and wander everywhere, out of compassion for the world and for the welfare of gods and men. Go forth, in different directions. Preach the doctrine (Dharham), salutary (Kalayana) in its beginning, middle and end, in its spirit (artha) and in its letter (vyanjana). Proclaim a life of perfect restraint, chastity and celibacy (Drahmacariyam). I will go also to preach this doctrine’ (Mahavagga 1.11.1). The Buddha went to Benares and performed many miracles in that territory; he delivered an impressive sermon on a hill just as Jesus had delivered his sermon on the mount. Again, the same book states that the Buddha preached mostly in

parables; he explained spiritual matters by means of physical analogies.”

In Search of the Israelites

Ahmad^{as} indicated that Jesus’ mission was to preach to the Israelites, referred to as the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel. He was their “shepherd” who would gather them as they had been lost both, spiritually and geographically. Spiritually, they were in need of his guidance; and geographically, they were scattered across Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and Kashmir.

Maulana J.D. Shams quotes from several historical works in his book *Where did Jesus Die?* :

“Modern investigation has shown that the Afghans, Kashmiris and the Beni Israel of Bombay are the descendants of Israel...We read in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* under Tribes: ‘Abraham Farissol identifies the river Ganges with the river Goxan and assumes that the Beni Israel of India are the descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes.’ ... According to their native traditions, the Afghans also are to be identified with the Lost Ten Tribes. They declare that Nebuchadnezzar banished them into the mountains of Ghor, whence they maintained correspondence with the Arabian Jews: Subsequently they became Muslims (Malcolm, *History of Persia*, 11,596, London, 1815). The Afghans still call themselves ‘Beni Israel’ and are declared to have a markedly Jewish appearance. Their claim to Israelitish descent is allowed by most Muslim writers. G. Moor, in his *Lost Tribes*, pp. 143-160, London, 1886, also identified the Afghans with the Ten Tribes.” (Page 83)

Where did Jesus Die? sent shockwaves in the United Kingdom, where it was first published in 1945. Much like the earlier publication of *Jesus in India*, it exposed thousands of confessions of unconvinced Christians who knew of no alternatives to the resurrection and ascension belief. Since then, considerable attention and credibility have been given to His Holiness Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s theory that Jesus^{as} survived the crucifixion, traveled eastward to preach to the Israelites and was buried in Kashmir. ♦

We invite our readers to explore these books, *Jesus in India* and *Where did Jesus Die?*, *Jesus Among the Lost Sheep* and several others on our website: www.alislam.org.



The Holy Prophet Muhammad

(Peace and blessings of God be upon him)

Since the beginning of time, there have only been a handful of men who have truly changed the world. These men are timeless, magnificent revolutionaries who are credited with changing the course of history. To millions of Muslims everywhere, the greatest of these men is the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him.

No man has created such a sensation as the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. No other man has been so simultaneously revered, idealized, misunderstood and maligned. To Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is the epitome of greatness. He is the greatest of all Prophets and men, the “Seal of the Prophets” and the perfect paradigm for how to live one’s life in the service of God. To others, Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} is an enigma. Some view him tolerantly as an ordinary man with an extraordinary message. Others, however, revile him; they criticize his heritage, manners and teachings and blame him for any modern problems that plague the Islamic world.

To make sense of this dichotomy, one must set aside any preconceived notions of either the Prophet or the man, Muhammad^{sa}. One must delve into his history, extract the facts as represented by his followers, wives and enemies and piece together a story that is altogether inspiring, astonishing and awe-inspiring.

In the year 610, at the age of 40, the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} experienced something so magnificent that it would change the course of history. Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} used to regularly meditate and pray in a cave at Mount Hira. On one such occasion, he had a vision of a man who commanded "Recite!" Since he could not read or write, he was shocked by this order and replied that he did not know how. The figure embraced him and insisted again. So, at last, the Prophet said,

"Recite thou in the name of thy Lord Who created, created man from a clot of blood. Recite! And thy Lord is the most beneficent, Who taught man by the pen, taught man what he knew not" (96:2-6).

This first revelation would later become part of the Quran, the Holy Book of Islam. It is particularly significant because it marks the beginning of Hadhrat Muhammad's^{sa} Prophethood. When Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} received this revelation, he trembled with fear because the sheer magnitude of the experience was so overwhelming. He later understood that God had placed a great responsibility upon his shoulders.

The task that was laid before the Prophet^{sa} was even more daunting considering the place and time in which it was assigned. The Holy Prophet^{sa} was born into a world of utter chaos and mayhem. Any progress that had been achieved by civilization in the last four thousand years was rapidly degenerating into lawlessness, savagery and barbarism. Entire countries fought against each other in a long succession of wars. The new sanctions by Christianity were creating divisions and destruction in the West. Reading, learning and the arts languished. Plagues, pestilence and unsanitary living conditions abounded

Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} bore this persecution with the greatest resolve, patience and nobility. Despite his enemies' best efforts, he never wavered in his message, nor did he cease praying for their salvation. He even refused to retaliate or curse the disbelievers. Instead, he spent entire nights weeping and praying so that God's punishment may be averted from them.

everywhere. In short, the world seemed to be suffering from the darkest period of the Dark Ages.

In the midst of this turmoil, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} emerged. After encountering his first vision, he realized that God intended him to be "the man born to unite the whole known world of the east and south" (J.H. Denison, *Emotions as the Basis of Civilization*. 265-269). Thus, with the help of his small group of followers, the Prophet began to spread his message.

Although most Meccans initially dismissed his claims, some of the slaves, women and young men flocked to his side. As the numbers of converts to Islam grew, the elders of Mecca became so alarmed that they intensified their campaign of persecution against Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} and his followers. As a result, the Holy Prophet and his followers were mercilessly and ruthlessly tormented and tortured for 13 long years in Mecca.

Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} bore this persecution with the greatest resolve, patience and nobility. Despite his enemies' best efforts, he never wavered in his message, nor did he cease praying for their salvation. He even refused to retaliate or curse the disbelievers. Instead, he spent entire nights weeping and praying so that God's punishment may be averted from them. God Almighty tells Muslims in the Quran about the compassion and mercy the Prophet showed his enemies. In Sura Al-Kahaf (18:7), God asks his prophet, "Will thou grieve thyself to death for sorrow over them if they believe not in this discourse?"

Yet, the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} continued to pray. He prayed for his enemies even when they stoned him on the streets of Taif, when his followers were being dragged by their hands and feet across hot cobblestone paths and when enemies placed camel's entrails on his back during his prayers so he could not stand up. During the countless years he suffered at the hands of the disbelievers, the Holy Prophet^{sa} never stopped praying for his

enemies.

To everyone's astonishment, the Holy Prophet^{sa} forgave his would-be assassins as well. For example, when Dasur, a man who tried to kill him, was captured and brought before him for punishment, Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} forgave and released him instead. He also forgave a Jewish woman who had tried to poison him. His mercy and forgiveness truly knew no bounds. This was most evident in the case of Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salul, the Chief of the Hypocrites, who had treacherously betrayed, abused and opposed him for years. Abdullah bin Ubay's son, a Muslim, asked the Prophet's permission to execute his own father for his transgressions. But the Prophet^{sa} replied, "I will treat your father with compassion and kindness". When this bitter enemy eventually died, Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} even went to offer his funeral prayers and stayed at the cemetery until Abdullah bin Ubay was buried.

His humanity and compassion were further evident in the heat of battle. During the first battle between the Muslims and the disbelievers, Muhammad's "army" was severely deficient. It had little resources and only included 300 men, some as young as thirteen years old. Despite this inequity, the small motley group of Muslims overcame the mighty Meccans in the Battle of Badr. When the prisoners of war were captured at the battle, Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} wept with great emotion at the sight his brethren. He gave strict instructions to his followers to treat all prisoners of war with dignity and respect. Every courtesy was to be afforded to the prisoners. The Holy Prophet was so adamant about these rules, that he declared whoever did not observe them would fight not for God, but for his own mean self (Abu-Dawud). In compliance with these orders, the Muslims would starve themselves in order to feed the POWs their meager rations. They also walked on foot so the prisoners could ride on camels.

Thus, he abolished all barbaric and savage practices during wartime. In

addition to treating prisoners like guests, he forbade mutilating the dead and killing women, children, religious or older people. He commanded in battle but personally refrained from shedding any blood. He gave strict instructions that the lives of his enemies should be spared whenever possible. In fact, he personally arranged his battles so they would inflict the least harm against the enemy. The Prophet's^{sa} tolerance for others extended to other religions as well. In several laws, such as the Charter of Medina and the Charter granted to the Monks of the Monastery of St. Catherine, the Prophet^{sa} established religious freedom and freedom of conscience for Jews and Christians. Under his guidance, people of other faiths were allowed to practice their faiths openly and unabashedly, without fear of persecution or recrimination from the Muslims.

Hadhrat Muhammad's^{sa} character was no less remarkable in his personal and private life. In a time when infanticide ran rampant and women were considered chattel with no rights or thoughts of their own, the Prophet^{sa} elevated them to a status greater than any man. In oft-quoted sayings of his, the Prophet^{sa} said, "paradise lies under the feet of the mother" and "the best among you is one who treats his wives and families the best". Among other things,

he gave women such important rights as owning property and gaining inheritance. He also bestowed them with choices; they now had the ability to choose their marriage partners and to divorce them if they were unhappy.

In his own home, the Holy Prophet treated his wives as equals, often seeking their comfort and counsel on important matters. Hadhrat Aisha^{ra} once said that Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} spent his free time helping with household chores and mending his own clothes. She also described his simple and humble habits regarding diet, living conditions and clothing. Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa}, the great prophet and ruler, only had one change of clothes. His main diet consisted of dates, barley and water. He slept on a leather sack filled with twigs and leaves.

This austere, simple life was adopted by choice, rather than by sheer necessity. If he had wanted, the Prophet^{sa} could have lived a life of great luxury and comfort. If he had been a lesser man, he would surely have taken advantage of his stature and enjoyed some of the luxuries that other leaders and kings felt entitled to. However, he was not interested in material goods. His sole purpose and desire was to please and worship God. This he did with such unflinching loyalty that his enemies would proclaim, "Muhammad is intoxicated with

the love of God".

There are countless examples of Hadhrat Muhammad's^{sa} magnanimous and benevolent conduct. The testimony of his followers, wives and even his enemies demonstrate that he was worthy of the titles bestowed upon him by God. By all accounts, he was a true "mercy to mankind" (21:108). God also described Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} with attributes that are normally reserved for Him Alone. He has stated that the Prophet^{sa} was both "Rauf" and "Raheem" (the most compassionate and the most merciful). Thus, God proclaims that the Prophet^{sa} is the perfect embodiment and complete reflection of Divine attributes.

In the end, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, founder of the Ahmadiyyat Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, said it best: "The proof of his spiritual life and holy majesty is that by following him and loving him, we become recipients of the holy spirit and are favored with the bounty of converse with God and witness heavenly signs" (Tiryaaqul Quloob, 11). ♦

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Prophets in Ahadith

Ahadith are the recorded sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

Volume 4, Book 55, Number 631:

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr: Allah's Apostle said to me, "The most beloved fasting to Allah was the fasting of (the Prophet) David who used to fast on alternate days. And the most beloved prayer to Allah was the prayer of David who used to sleep for (the first) half of the night and pray for 1/3 of it and (again) sleep for a sixth of it."

Volume 4, Book 55, Number 644:

Narrated 'Ubada: The Prophet said, "If anyone testifies that None has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone Who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His Slave and His Apostle, and that Jesus is Allah's Slave and His Apostle and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit created by Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few." (Junada, the sub-narrator said, " 'Ubada added, 'Such a person can enter Paradise through any of its eight gates he likes.'")



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
Promised Messiah and Mahdi (1835-1908)

Second Coming of the Messiah: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

By Falahud Din Shams

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and World Messenger of the Latter Days, has appeared in the East, in Qadian, India. In his person were fulfilled the scriptural prophecies concerning the second advent of Jesus. He founded the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, an organization devoted to the cause of spreading his heavenly message to all corners of the world.

God spoke to Ahmad saying that He has metaphorically made him the Messiah, the son of Mary. He has come in the footsteps of Jesus.

We are all blessed immeasurably to have been born during the time of one of the Holy Messengers of God. But there are many among us today who stand in danger of losing a rare opportunity. For only those can benefit from his advent who hear and perceive

People cite the Scriptures that he will descend from the heavens, for it is written: "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels and shall gather together his elect..." II (Mark 13: 26-27).

But people do not reflect over the words of Jesus. They strive not to understand what he has explained in his parables.

It had been written: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Malachi 4:5). In due course, Jesus appeared. But the Jews rejected him on the ground that Elijah had not first descended

from Heaven to prepare the way for him as they were expecting.

Even the disciples were confused and sought guidance from Jesus. The Bible states, "his disciples asked Jesus, saying Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:10-13)

God's secrets are disclosed only at the appointed time, and are disclosed only to those to whom God opens the gates of His knowledge. Jesus, having been imparted this knowledge, explained to his disciples that John the Baptist was Elias and that they might accept him if they would. It is patent, therefore, that what was meant by Elias descending from Heaven was that John should, as the angel had foretold before his birth, go before Jesus in the spirit and power of Elias (Luke 1:17). Thus Jesus simply explained that when the prophecies speak of the "Second Coming" of a prophet from the Heavens, they actually mean the appearance of a prophet "Like unto him". In this verse, he also hinted that the same would be true of his own "Second Coming".

If Jesus was really to come down from heaven, why did he give a warning that people should not be deceived by the fulfillment of a few signs, but must wait until all be fulfilled? Would he not, in that case, have said, "They shall appear from the earth, but I shall descend from Heaven", so that there could be no mistake? Why does he ask his disciples to endure and to wait? Why does he not say, "Accept him who comes from heaven and reject all others?" Why does he not appoint any other sign but this? If he was to descend from heaven, why did his disciples ask him, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" Was this not sign enough that he would come down from Heaven with a host of angels? And could there be any mistake about him?

It was appointed that another prophet should come in the spirit of Jesus, and not that Jesus himself should come down from heaven. To know him, therefore, we should ponder over the words of the prophecies and should search for their true meaning like the diver who dives into the bottom of the ocean searching for pearls.

Coming in the clouds

The promise of Jesus that at the appointed

time the Son of Man would be seen "coming in the clouds with great glory", with a host of angels has created much confusion in the minds of his followers. Students of science have forsaken religion entirely as a result of such scriptural references. They feel that wisdom should be expected of God. The trouble lies not in the references themselves, but in misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

Jesus spoke in parables. There are so many examples of the same sort of symbolic speech in the Bible which are accepted as such, that it is difficult to understand why so many people cannot see beyond mere words in the question of Jesus and his second coming. Webster's dictionary defines the word "cloudy" as "overcast obscure; dark; gloomy; confused." The most likely interpretation in the case of Jesus is that his approach will be of a "cloudy" nature.

Considering other prophecies made by Jesus about his second advent, anyone or all of these definitions would apply. He has described his coming as "like a thief in the night" (Luke 12:39; Rev 3:3; I Thess 5:2) and "at an hour when ye think not" (Matthew 24:44).

Thus, simply, this prophecy of Jesus meant that his appearance would be of an obscure nature, and that he would not be recognized in the beginning. But with the help of God's angels, his presence would be made manifest to those who sincerely awaited his coming. Otherwise, how would it be possible for him to "gather his elect"? If he were to appear in the sky in a blaze of glory, the whole mankind would be so suddenly transformed by awe that it would be impossible to recognize the faithful or "separate the sheep from the goats."

According to prophecies about the time of his appearance, the condition of the world at that time shall be dark, gloomy, and confused. The wave of false prophets appearing in that age shall make his own truth doubtful to many.

This prophecy certainly can be said to have been fulfilled in the appearance of Hadhrat Ahmad (on whom be peace). It seems that no other prophet ever had so many difficulties to contend with in making himself known to people. His astonishing success in spite of the odds against him may be cited as one of the strongest proofs of the truth of his claim.

Hadhrat Ahmad was born in Qadian, a tiny village in India. It might be called one of the most obscure places on earth, having no transportation facilities or communication

with the outside world. He was a quiet and inconspicuous person who never cared for the limelight. He lived during the height of the British Empire, when Christian missionaries from all lands concentrated their efforts on the natives of India, backed by strong churches and governments. The political and religious climate in India during that time was very much like that of Palestine in the time of Jesus. In short, there was hardly a chance for a person in Hadhrat Ahmad's position to attract any amount of attention to himself or his mission.

However, from the moment God revealed to him that he was the Messiah, things began to change in Qadian. People from all over the world were drawn to this little village, many of them leaving their professions, homes and families. Seekers after truth in far countries were informed of his presence in miraculous ways, through dreams, etc., and rushed to Qadian to see and believe in him. Even those people who opposed him were bound to admit that he was no ordinary adversary, for most of them experienced the wrath of God in fulfillment of Ahmad's prophecies. Truly, Divine Forces were working on his behalf.

Signs of the time

Jesus warned his followers with regard to his second appearance that they should not be content with only a few signs, but should wait until all of his prophecies were fulfilled. Only then, he said, would the rightful claimant appear.

This being the case, we must see whether all that had been written concerning the time of the second advent of Jesus was fulfilled in the time of Hadhrat Ahmad (peace be upon him) and at his hands.

It had been said there would be wars, and wars there have been in abundance and on a scale which had never been witnessed before. Especially the last two World Wars. War and destruction seem to be the order of the day. It had been said that there would be pestilences and in spite of the great advance which the world has made in hygiene, unparalleled ravages have been caused by influenza and plague. It had been said that there would be earthquakes, and we find that the frequency and intensity of earthquakes now being experienced were never experienced before within twice the period. It had been said that there would be famines, and in spite of irrigation canals and railroads, ships, and other facilities for the carriage of commodities, the world has passed through famines so severe that they

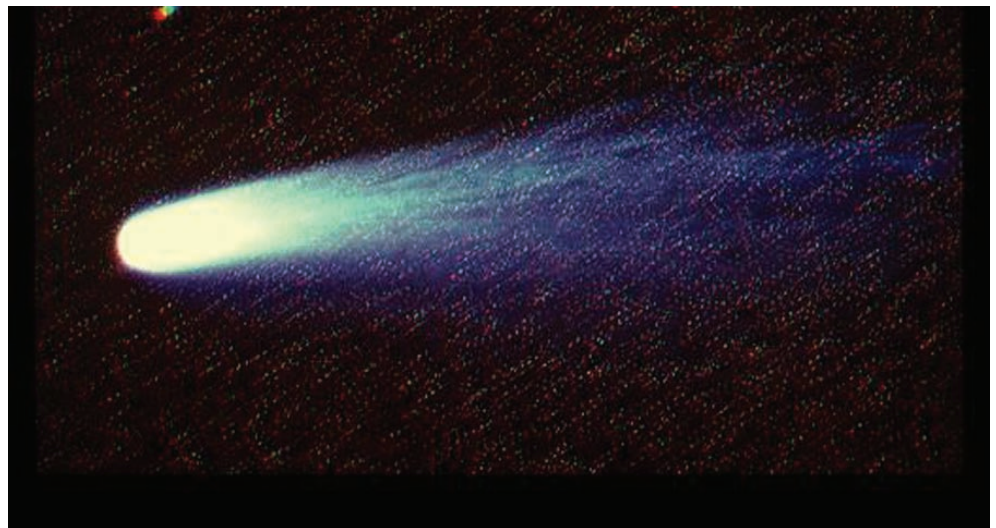
have caused the death of many thousands. It had been said that rivers would become red with blood. The reports that come from warfronts make no other comment necessary. Iniquity abounds to such a degree that not only a brother betrays a brother but finds pleasure in the act (Matthew 10:21, 24:10). All of these signs have been fulfilled so clearly that no doubt has been left concerning them.

Just about the time of Hadhrat Ahmad's birth, the followers of different religions had begun to look for the Promised One and God had in different parts of the world revealed to many the tidings of the approach of the Savior of the world; so that by the middle of the nineteenth century both in Europe and in Asia, men of diverse races and religions had begun to expect the Promised One and many began to utter warnings such as, "Behold, the Promised One is nigh, arise and prepare, lest he find you asleep."

Thus, from the very moment of his birth Hadhrat Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, acquired a resemblance to him under whose name he was destined to guide the world, for at the time of the birth of Jesus also the messianic hope among the Jews had reached its peak. In addition to an eclipse of the Sun and Moon that occurred according to prophecies in some Muslim writings, the famed "Haley's Comet" made its spectacular appearance only a few years after he published his claim to Prophethood. This sign was seen by people in every corner of the world, fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (Matthew 24:30).

As to the darkening of the Sun and the Moon and the falling of the stars and the shaking of the powers of Heaven, it might appear as if they had not yet been fulfilled. But those who reflect over sacred writings and are familiar with the working of Divine Laws have no difficulty in arriving at the real meaning of these words.

It is obvious that these words cannot be taken literally. If the sun were to literally darkened, life on this planet would become extinct, as all life is dependent on the light of the Sun. If the stars fell from the heavens, this world would be annihilated, for every part of the universe is dependent upon every other and cannot exist without it. Again, if the powers of Heaven were shaken literally, not only humans but even angels would cease to exist. Jesus himself has said that after these things come to pass, the Son of Man will take away the earth from the evil-doers and give the inheritance thereof to the righteous. But if the Sun and the Moon



In addition to an eclipse of the Sun and Moon that occurred according to prophecies in some Muslim writings, the famed "Haley's Comet" made its spectacular appearance only a few years after he published his claim to Prophethood. This sign was seen by people in every corner of the world, fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (Matthew 24:30).

should cease to give forth light and the stars fallout of heaven, even the righteous would cease to exist, for their bodies are constructed in the same manner as those of sinners, and depend on light and air for survival. Besides, if the Sun and Moon were to be darkened nobody would be able to see the Son of Man coming down from heaven, and all of this dramatic activity would be wasted for lack of an audience.

It is clear, therefore, that this prophecy cannot be construed literally and that there is a hidden meaning in it, as is very often the case with revealed words; and that meaning is that the Sun and the Moon will be eclipsed in those days and Meteors will fall in large number, and power of religious leaders over their followers will be weakened, for in religious literature heavenly powers signify leaders of religion.

The hold of religious leaders over their followers has never been as weak as in these days and the sway of religion over the lives of the people has never been so loose. The churches depend on entertainment to hold their congregations together, and in fact, find it difficult to keep order during their services without limiting the

sermon to forty minutes.

Profanity and irreligion are rampant and people have come to regard religion as superstition and an encumbrance. This feeling is not confined to the followers of any particular religion. All religions are being ridiculed and whatever power religious leaders still hold over their followers is of a nature more political than religious. This again is a sign which has been fulfilled in these days.

All of these prophecies which had foretold the advent of the Promised Messiah clearly indicate that the present is the time when the Messiah should have appeared. For "When ye see a cloud rise out of the West, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower and so it is. And when ye see the South wind blow, ye say, there will be heat; and it cometh to pass, Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth but how is it ye do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54-56)

Thus all that was written having been fulfilled the Messiah must surely have appeared and those who love him must seek him.

Where will Jesus appear

Jesus has warned many times against false prophets. In fact, his repeated warnings

have misled his followers into the belief that all future prophets would be impostors (God forbid).

However, if we search the scriptures and read his prophecies with open eyes, we will have no trouble in distinguishing the true Messiah from the false. For he has himself specified the place of his appearance and has kept nothing secret lest some say: "How shall we find him by seeking in the wide world? Has he not said: "For as the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:27-28).

This parable clearly states that he will appear in the East, and that his message and teachings will "shine" into the uttermost corners of the world. Like the lightning, he will be a shock to many people, for the shocking and unexpected truth he brings will hit them like a storm and deal a death blow to their false doctrines. Finally he will bring peace ... a new Heaven and a new Earth, where man will live in harmony through obedience to the Will of God. And so it is happening before our very eyes. Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, appeared in Qadian, India. He came in the spirit and power to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Like all previous messengers of God, he was at first rejected by all but a small number of elect. However, in only a few years his truth began spreading all over the world. His organization has been established in over 180 countries; thus, fulfilling the prophecy, for even now his light is shining "unto the West".

"Wheresoever the carcass is, there shall the eagles be gathered together." From the day Hadrath Ahmad declared that God had made him the Messiah, the little town of Qadian has been teeming with life. Righteous men and women from all over the world began flocking to his doorstep, led by visions and other marvelous signs from God. In a few short years Qadian, once only a wide spot in the road, became a teeming metropolis. Houses were enlarged to accommodate the overflow of guests. Schools and colleges were built. Young people began to dedicate their lives, as in olden days, to the service of God, and were sent as missionaries to spread the glad tidings in foreign lands. Thus, the



Predicting the Great War, which in prophecy is compared to an earthquake, Ahmad, the Promised Messenger of the Latter Days, said on April 15th 1905: "With the blood of the dead, the streams of the mountains shall become red like red wine."

wonderful prophecies of Jesus have been and are being fulfilled to the letter.

How to distinguish a true prophet from a false prophet

It may be asked, "How shall we know that the words of Hadrath Ahmad are true and that God has made him the Messiah and that all he speaks is the truth, for we have been warned that 'Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many' (Matthew 24:5), and again 'There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect!'" (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22)

Here, indeed, is a warning against false prophets; and it is said that they shall show great signs and wonders; but is it not also said that "If it were possible they shall deceive the elect?" This shows that there are means of knowing the true prophet from the false one, by the help of which the elect shall know the true prophet and shall not be deceived by the false.

Their signs and wonders must be of a nature different from that of the signs and wonders of the true prophets, for if this were not so, then how can we say that Moses and David and John and even Jesus himself were true prophets?

We find, however, that Jesus puts forward his signs and wonders as

testimonies of his truth, for we read that when John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus and they asked him, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" He answered and said unto them, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matthew 11:3-6; Luke 7:20-23).

It must not be misunderstood from these words of Jesus that all of his miracles and signs were of physical nature. Although many stories of his healing miracles are related in this sense, it is clear from other passages in the Gospels that his healing powers were more or less confined to spiritual diseases.

If Jesus actually was able to bring the dead back to life, every true Christian today should possess the same power. For we read in the Gospels, "He that believeth on me (Jesus), the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." (John 14:12; Matthew 17:20; Mark 9:23, 11:23, 16:16-18). Either Jesus did nothing of the kind physically, or else the Christians for generations have not been able to produce a real believer in Jesus. For we know of no proven incident in history of a Christian restoring life to a corpse, or even

driving out the simplest of demons.

It is obvious, then, that the miracles of Jesus were of a pure spiritual nature, as were the miracles and signs shown by Hadhrat Ahmad, his counterpart in our age.

It is written "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:21-22).

It is clear, therefore, that signs and prophecies are the testimonies of the truth of a prophet, and the wonders which Jesus attributes to false prophets are of a nature different from those shown by God's prophets. They are tricks and sleights of hand, whereas the signs of true prophets are of a supernatural order which manifest the glory of God. Such signs and prophecies are the means of knowing a prophet. The Messenger and Prophet of these days may also be judged by the signs which have been fulfilled at their appointed time.

Prophecies of the Promised Messiah

Predicting the Great War, which in prophecy is compared to an earthquake, Ahmad, the Promised Messenger of the Latter Days, said on April 15th 1905:

"With the blood of the dead, the streams of the mountains shall become red like red wine.

"All the men and spirits shall lose their presence of mind for fear: and even the Czar shall be in a miserable condition at that hour."

"That heavenly sign will be a specimen of God's wrath:

Heaven shall direct its charge against the world with its drawn dagger. Don't deny it through impatience for on it rests the truth of my claims."

In October 1906, he again repeated his warning in the following words:

"Death will make such havoc that streams of blood will flow.

The destruction on the earth's surface shall be greater than any the world has wit-

nessed before. Many places shall be turned upside down and present such scenes of destruction that one would think they had never been inhabited ... Then will men in great bewilderment begin to ask themselves what is going to happen ... Had I not come, these calamities would also have been put off for a while, but with my appearance, the secret designs of the wrath of God have been made manifest; for He says that punishment is not sent, until a messenger is raised ... Thou, O Asia! And ye that dwell in the islands! No self-made deity will assist you on that day. I see cities falling down, and I find inhabited places in ruins. The Omnipotent God has kept silence for a long time while detestable deeds were done in His sight, but now He will show His face with great awe. Let him who has ears hear that the time is not distant. I strove hard to gather men under the protection of God, but it was necessary that the writing of fate should have been fulfilled, I say to you truly that the turn of this country is drawing near. The days of Noah will come before your eyes; and the scene of Lot's earth you will see with your own eyes. But God is slow in sending His wrath. Repent, so that mercy will be shown to you. He who forsakes God is a worm, not a man, and he who does not fear Him is dead, not living."

All of these prophecies were made at a time when war seemed most unlikely. There was no indication that atomic bombs would ever be thought of or that the whole of Europe would be torn by the ravages of war. World Communism with its accompanying terror and destruction was still a thing of the future. The Czar of Russia was then at the height of his power, and it seemed impossible that his condition would ever be changed.

What should we conclude then about these remarkable happenings?

There is only one inevitable conclusion:

1. That there is a Living God who speaks to His chosen ones, Who imports knowledge of the future, Who controls the affairs of the world and is Mighty and Powerful.

2. That Ahmad (peace be on him), the Warner of the present day, was certainly raised by God in accordance with His promises in the Scriptures of all faiths.

3. That all Hadhrat Ahmad's warnings pronounced with such authority and power have been fulfilled.

4. That now no other alternative exists but to believe in God, and in Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam, the Messenger and Messiah, who, like Jesus, is the way and the life, and who offers the only truth for men of our times.

The messiah has come

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus foretold his second advent in the Latter Days. Christians, who claim to be the followers of Jesus, have been waiting for their master since that day. Is it not strange that they do not rush to investigate every claimant who says he has come "In the name of the Lord"? (Matthew 23:39)

"We have been warned to be aware of false prophets, and will not believe that the Messiah has come until we see him coming down from the sky" is their typical objection.

Jesus clearly explained that false prophets would be known by their fruits. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. EVERY TREE THAT BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT IS HEWN DOWN AND CAST INTO THE FIRE. (Matthew 7:15-19) Now, if every prophet in the future was to be false, would there have been any need to set such a standard?

Jesus warned that there would be both good and corrupt trees, both false and true prophets. His parable was only a help so that the people be able to easily distinguish between the two.

Again, Jesus did not necessarily say that in a certain year a certain man would claim to be a prophet and that he would be either true or false. He expected his followers to have sense enough to judge a prophet on his merits, and decide for themselves. By his example of two trees, he warned that they should carefully examine each claimant to prophethood, and then accept or reject him on the basis of knowledge and understanding – For how can a man know whether the fruit is sweet or bitter if he is too stubborn to taste it? ♦



Ahmadiyyat in Ghana, West Africa

Akwaaba

Akwaaba, meaning welcome, is the warm greeting with which Ghanaians will welcome you to their country.

This issue celebrates one year of the new and improved Muslim Sunrise and we would like to thank our readers who continue to make the Muslim Sunrise their main source for the Islamic connection in diversity. We are pleased to welcome the growing list of readers and subscribers.

In our next issue we will continue to explore diverse issues including the following:

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- **Honor thy parents and teachers.**
- **Roe vs. Wade: The Islamic Perspective.**
- **American Justice . Absolute Justice.**
- **Separation of Church and State in Islam.**
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