

INTRODUCTION

How does the Quran describe itself? There are multiple verses in the Quran that emphasize on the inimitability, perfection, and miraculousness of the Quran (Q 2:23, 17:88, 11:13, 10:38, 52:34) (*The Holy Qur'an*, t.t.). One of the main arguments that the Quran puts forward to prove its divine origin and consequent perfection is its absolute non-contradictory nature (Q 4:82). However, there is a difference between the text of the Quran and its exegesis. Many times, an explanation that is offered by a scholar for an ayat could produce a contradiction or confusion, which is not representative of a contradiction in the Quranic text. This is more prevalent in verses of the Quran that are ambiguous in nature. In this paper we will discuss how the unscrupulous use of Biblical narratives, also known as Israiliyaat, in Quranic exegesis compromises on the fundamental non-contradictory nature of the Quran. Israiliyaat are reports from the Bible transmitted by early converts to Islam from the Judeo-Christian tradition (Albayrak 2000). Most of these are fabrications and apocryphal stories that oftentimes are insulting or even blasphemous regarding the Prophets of God. It will be discussed how unwarranted intrusion of apocryphal stories undermines the primary timeless moral principles of Islam and obscures God's role as the upholder of piety and morality.

Three examples are considered in the paper, one being the sacrificial lamb story of Prophet Ibrahim seeing a dream about his son being sacrificed by him. Another is the incident of Prophet Yaqub and his family allegedly prostrating to Prophet Yusuf and lastly the story of Prophet Adam's children inbreeding in order to procreate. It will be shown how in all these three instances, the Israiliyaat literature was unscrupulously used to provide explanations. In so doing, the actual Quranic narrative was heavily overshadowed and severely undermined.

The Quran was revealed to correct and rectify the mistakes documented in the earlier holy books (Q 16:64). The Quran was not revealed to be explained in the light of those mistakes, inconsistencies and lies. The Old Testament speaks

about Prophet Lut's daughters committing incest with their father (Genesis 19:31:35) (t.t.) and Prophet David committing adultery with Bathsheba and conspiring to murder her husband (2 Samuel 11:1-27). It talks about Prophet Sulaiman committing idolatry, magic and living an extremely extravagant hyper-polygamous life (1 Kings 11:6-10). Also Noah committing sodomy with his son is mentioned in the Bible. The Quran on the other hand clears them of all these charges and presents them as righteous and devout people. In the Quran, Prophet Lut and his daughters are called the most upright people in those cities (Q 51:36). and Prophet David and Noah are depicted in the Quran as the most devout and righteous people (Q38:30). Prophet Sulaiman is cleared of all charges of worshipping the devils and is presented as an extremely devout and ascetic man, who despite his wealth and power dedicated his life to God (Q 2:102).

Now if this is the role of the Quran with respect to the Bible i.e. to confirm the truth in it and to reject the falsehood in it (Q 3:3-4), that proves that the Quran is a Criterion (*Furqan*) (Q 25: 1). Then how can the Bible which has multiple fabrications in it be used to explain the book that is a criterion over it? But unfortunately, over time we see the influx of the Israiliyyaat through statements attributed to some companions (*sahaba*) into the early exegetical literature. As they became an integral part of the tafsir literature, later scholars even compromised on the Quranic message just to justify these Israiliyyaat, without realizing that these are of foreign import in the first place.

This paper will scrutinize these influxes and provide suitable explanations. However, the main focus of the paper will be on the intrusion of Israiliyyaat in understanding progression of human lineage through the alleged incest of Adam's children. The incest story has been provided as the main explanation for this since millennia. But this Israiliyyaat report comes into direct conflict with the Quran and its view of God and morality.

This question of either accepting this explanation or dismissing it would have serious consequences in understanding the origin of life. If there were just two

humans present on earth, how did human lineage move forward? Incest has been considered a serious moral abomination just like murder or adultery since the beginning of the human race. Allah has established a moral order in the world right from the very beginning. So, how is it that he would command something which is a complete moral abomination?

But if incest is to be totally excluded from the explanation because of multiple reasons, then the only explanation for the procreation of the human race seems to be the evolutionary mechanism. This paper will discuss the tenability of such a proposition and possible interpretation along with briefly discussing medieval as well as modern Muslim ideas on Evolution including contemporary efforts. This paper aims to revive a new discourse and outlook on multiple related topics like *Israiliyaat*, Creationism and Evolution.

CORRECT METHODOLOGY TO INTERPRET THE QURAN

One important issue that needs to be discussed is what is the hierarchy in Islamic knowledge? Is the Quran the highest and most authoritative? Or are the Hadith equal to the Quran in status? Dr Muhammad Fazlur Rahman Ansari writes the historical consensus in the Muslim ummah has been that the Quran is absolute truth (Q 69:51) and in comparison, the hadith are relative truths i.e truths accepted only after a due process of verification.

He also notes the great movement of fabrication that took place in the field of Hadith, whereas the Quran has stayed immune to such fabrications (Ansari 2012). There exist various reports from the first generation of the Sahaba where they would not accept a hadith if it was in conflict with the Quran (Muhsin Khan, t.t.). Clearly proving that the Quran is the supreme criterion to judge whereas the hadith do not reach that level.

This hierarchy has to be considered when understanding any issue from the Islamic perspective. But how does one arrive at the most sound explanation of an issue keeping in mind this hierarchy? Dr Ansari emphasizing on the non-

contradictory nature of the Quran, states that any given issue that needs an Islamic explanation, first has to be preceded by building what he calls a System of Meaning from the Quran (Ansari 2012). This is the process of collating all the relevant *ayat* on the issue and then drawing a coherent picture and meaning out of the different *ayat* on this particular issue. For example, if we want to understand the origin of life, we would have to bring together all the different verses that discuss this and then draw our conclusions from this collection of *ayat*. This process should be done so as to avoid isolating an *ayat* from the rest of the Quranic text. This practice of decontextualizing and isolating *ayat* from the rest of the Quran has been criticized by the ulema. The Quran is non-contradictory in nature, by taking an *ayat* in isolation from the rest of the text, one can arrive at contradictory conclusions. Imran N Hosein writes that the Quran has been likened to the star sky where correct navigation entails that each verse be related to every other verse related to the subject just like a navigator who charts out the correct direction by comparing the position of different star with respect to other planets and stars (Sheikh Imran Hosein 2016). Once the System Of Meaning has been constructed from the Quran then its time to introduce and further enrich the subject with the hadith because the Hadith are an explanation of the Quran, not a judge over the Quran (Al Baghdadi 2003). All the hadith that conform to the Quranic System of Meaning are considered and the hadith that are irreconcilable with this Quranic System of Meaning are 'left'. This is done because in principle there should be no contradiction between the Quran and the Hadith as both have been related from the same source i.e. from the Prophet (pbuh). If there is a hadith that directly conflicts with the Quran, then there must be some issue with its narration as the Prophet (pbuh) would not contradict the Quran.

This method of verification of Hadith is over and above the conventional Hadith verification through the chains of narration and the veracity of the narrator (Ansari 2012). As we can see in this scheme, the Israiliyyaat have almost no significance. They are way below when it comes to authority and veracity. They

form a part of the apocrypha that were used by 3rd/9th century exegetes in their works.

MUSLIM RECEPTION OF ISRAILIYYAT LITERATURE

Israiliyyat are narratives assumed to be of foreign import, studied usually under Hadith studies. These stories originated from Judeo-Christian sources and are mostly considered apocryphal. Initially, they were perceived as being an alien source of knowledge and oftentimes contained fantastical and irrational materials (Albayrak 2000). Despite the continual and pervasive negative regard for Israiliyyat (Bukhari: 7362, 7363), nonetheless, much of this material has been utilized by Muslim commentators throughout Islamic history. The Quran discusses how the Bible contains serious fabrications and even blasphemous statements regarding Allah and His Messengers.

“Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allah," to purchase with it a little price! Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn thereby” (Q 2:79)

The Quran in numerous places establishes the inauthenticity of the Bible and the inclusion of falsity into the texts by priests and rabbis (Q 5:15, 3:71, 3:187).

The Quran and hadith also warns Muslims from following the footsteps of the People of the Book because of these particular crimes (Q 1:7). Lastly the Quran also discourages Muslims from taking information from the Judeo-Christian tradition except in cases where the subject matter is totally unambiguous (18:22). The same cautionary attitude is found in the prophetic traditions as well.

The Prophet in various statements asked the Muslims to have skeptical or at least a non-committal attitude towards the Israiliyyat.

The People of the Book used to read the Torah in Hebrew and then explain it in Arabic to the Muslims. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "Do not believe the People of the Book, nor disbelieve them, but say, 'We believe in Allah and

whatever is revealed to us, and whatever is revealed to you.' " (Sahih Bukhari 7362) (Bukhari, Ibn Isma'il 1992).

Even the companions carried on this critical attitude towards the Israiliyyaat.

Ibn `Abbas said, *"Why do you ask the people of the scripture about anything while your Book (Qur'an) which has been revealed to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) is newer and the latest? You read it pure, undistorted and unchanged, and Allah has told you that the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) changed their scripture and distorted it, and wrote the scripture with their own hands and said, 'It is from Allah,' to sell it for a little gain. Does not the knowledge which has come to you prevent you from asking them about anything? No, by Allah, we have never seen any man from them asking you regarding what has been revealed to you!"* (Sahih Bukhari 7363)

Similarly, Ibn Mas'oud reports a command of the Prophet *'Do not ask the People of the Book because they will not guide you having already led themselves astray.'* He also counseled the companions, saying *'If the People of the Book tell you something do not either accept it as true or reject it as false for they may tell you something which is false but you may accept it is true.'* (Al-Zahabi, Husain 1971)

It is reported that Umar wrote some part of the Torah in Arabic and brought it to the Prophet. When he started reading what he wrote, the face of the Prophet changed. Then one of the Madinians told Umar: *'Shame on you Umar! Look at the face of the Messenger of God.'* The Prophet said *'Do not ask the People of the Book about anything, because they will not show you the right path, having already led themselves astray. Otherwise, you accuse the truth of falsehood and confirm the wrong; I swear that even if Moses was alive among you nothing would be opened to him but to follow me.'"* (Ibn Hanbal, Ahmed 2012, 3:3)

Now if this was the case when the Prophet (pbuh) was present in Medina to correct misunderstandings how strong the prohibition should be when the Prophet (pbuh) is not physically present with us.

Despite such strong prohibitions, the Israiliyaat have become a part of Hadith literature and more dangerously Quranic exegesis? This matter is so serious that people who deny a particular interpretation based on Israiliyaat and offer a new interpretation are excommunicated from the religion at times. That is how strongly the Israiliyaat have penetrated the Quranic exegesis. The intrusion of these apocryphal fabrications is justified through some decontextualized *ayat* and hadith that allow taking 'some' knowledge from Israiliyaat sources if it seems right. But who determines whether it's right or wrong?

"So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so Ibn Hanbal, Ahmed never be among the doubters." (Q 10:94).

Clearly it doesn't mean particulars of revelation. This *ayat* is referring to the very phenomenon of revelation. Ask the Jews and the Christians if you are in doubt about the fact that God sends revelations to His Prophets. The pagan Arabs had no concept of divine revelation through prophets.

Ibn Hajar narrated that Shaafa'i said: "It is well-known that the Prophet (pbuh) did not permit the narration of lies. What is meant by narrating from the Children of Israel is that which you do not know to be a lie. As for what you think sounds reasonable, there is nothing wrong with you narrating it from them." (Al Asqalani, Ibn Hajar 1980). Again, the early exegetes took the Israiliyaat to explain unseen events of the past which could not have been verified by anyone.

USE OF ISRAILIYAAT IN UNDERSTANDING PROPHET IBRAHIM'S DREAM

There are various instances of the use of Israiliyat literature in Quranic exegesis. We will be mentioning a few. The sacrificial lamb story that is explained in detail in the Old Testament has been reconciled completely with the Quranic narrative of Prophet Ibrahim's dream. All important tafsir literature explains this incident as Prophet Ibrahim being 'commanded' by God to sacrifice his son.

Undoubtedly, this is primarily drawn from Israiliyyaat literature and the inputs from early converts to Islam from the Judeo-Christian tradition as there is literally no difference between the Old Testament and the tafsir literature on it except for the debate on who the son was. Even though this understanding of the incident goes against the Quran manifestly, the Israiliyyat literature is still adopted to explain the event.

Human sacrifice of every sort has been prohibited by Allah and has been severely criticized in the Quran as it invites divine wrath. (6:140, 17:31, 6:151, 81:8, 16:59) Murder is prohibited in the Quran and has been equated with killing the whole of humanity. (Q5:32)

So why would Allah command His prophet to sacrifice his son? And especially when the son is so righteous and a prophet himself. Allah censures the communities who killed their prophets. Or does God sometimes command evil acts? But this is also rejected in the Quran.

“Say, “Indeed, Allah does not order immorality. Do you say about Allah that which you do not know?” (Q 7:28).

The Quran emphatically declares that Allah Most High commands justice, piety and righteousness and forbids evil in all forms. (16:90). Or is God indecisive? That is an imperfection which cannot be attributed to Him. Or is God jealous as the Bible says that He has to test Prophet Ibrahim to see who he loves the most? But the Quranic God is free of all needs.

If the interpretation that Allah ‘commanded’ Ibrahim (as) to literally cut his young son’s throat, is accepted we face the bigger dilemma of addressing whether the Quran has contradictions, as Allah commands something that He Himself prohibits (human sacrifice) or is indecisive as He changes His mind over what He had commanded, or is jealous which is another imperfection. It clearly conflicts with the objective moral order that the Quran calls the Sunnah of Allah. Allah destroyed previous nations because they transgressed against that order and killed

people unjustly, and here according to this understanding He commands something similar to what the transgressors were guilty of.

According to Imran Nazar Hosein and Dr Mohammad Fazlur Rahman Ansari, the *ayat* of the Quran must be understood in conjunction with the rest of the Quran, not in isolation from the rest of the text (Ansari 2012).

So, what if we could erase the Israiliyaat underpinnings of this narrative and try to understand the event just through the Quran. Imran N Hosein resolves this as he arrives at the conclusion that Prophet Ibrahim was shown a dream in which he saw himself killing his son. But was it a literal command to kill or some news about the future? All the dreams mentioned in the Quran have been understood as news about the future. And dreams sometimes are presented in a symbolic form that requires interpretation. This dream does not mean that Allah wants Ibrahim to kill his son. Rather, it is a dream, and a dream has a message about the future (*khabr*) and the message has an interpretation, a meaning (*ta'wil* and *ta'bir*) (Sheikh Imran Hosein 2016).

So this dream was shown in order to inform Prophet Ibrahim the fate of his progeny from his son Ismail. Meaning that the Arabs, being the descendants of Ismail (as) will encounter great tribulations and massacres as time progresses. And when Ibrahim (as) enacted what he saw in the dream, that was a display of his utmost acceptance and wholehearted consent with the Qadr (will) of Allah regarding the fate that awaits his progeny from one of his sons. Allah says, “*You have realized or accepted the vision*”. It doesn't say you have obeyed the command. This dream corresponds with another dream which was given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when he saw the destruction of Arabs as the barrier of Gog and Magog had begun to be opened. And this great tribulation is what is meant by the term ‘*dhibhin adheem*’ (mighty sacrifice) that would come in the End Times with mass killing, wars and strife that would be unleashed over the Arab nations (Sheikh Imran Hosein 2016).

This tribulation had begun from the advent of Crusades, then European Colonization, American imperialism etc and continues in and around the Holy Land up until today.

USE OF ISRAILIYAAT LITERATURE IN PROPHET YAQUB'S PROSTRATION TO PROPHET YUSUF

Another example of the intrusion of Israiliyat literature into Quranic exegesis is found in Surah Yusuf. This is also connected to a dream. Prophet Yusuf sees a dream that the sun, moon and eleven stars perform prostration. The Arabic word used is '*li*' which could mean 'for him' or 'to him'. The Arabic preposition '*li*' has multiple meanings. Then the surah ends when Prophet Yusuf is united with his parents and eleven brothers, and they all prostrate together. The same preposition of '*li*' is used along with an attached pronoun making it '*lahu*'.

“When they entered Joseph’s presence, he received his parents graciously and said, “Enter Egypt, if God wills, in security. Then he raised his parents to the throne, and they all fell down in prostration to Him (*lahu*), and he said, “O my dear father! This is the interpretation of my old dream. My Lord has made it come true.” (Q 12: 99-100)

Now the '*lahu*' could be referring to Prophet Yusuf and this is the most prevalent opinion that is found in most tafsir literature. But this opinion seems to come from the Old Testament.

“Now Joseph was the ruler of the land; he was the one who sold grain to all its people. So, when his brothers arrived, they bowed down before him with their faces to the ground.” (Genesis 42:6)

Whereas we know that in the Quran prostration to anyone other than God is one of the greatest sins. This is an act of polytheism. Why would a righteous Prophet prostrate to another prophet? In order to make this Israiliyaat explanation acceptable, it is justified by saying that it may have been allowed in the law of Prophet Yusuf to prostrate to other people in a respectful manner. But Prophet

Yusuf explicitly says that he follows the way of his grandfather Prophet Ibrahim, and he was completely devoted to God's worship.

There was no such practice in Ibrahim's message. "And who can be better in religion than one who submits his face (himself) to Allah (i.e. follows Allah's Religion of Islamic Monotheism); and he is a doer of good. And follows the religion of Ibrahim i.e Hanifa" (Q 4:125).

This issue is resolved by Fakhruddin Razi in his Tafsir Kabir, as he references the companion Ibn Abbas, and explains that the personal pronoun in Q 12:99-100 i.e. '*lahu*' (before Him) relates to God, as it would be inconceivable that Yusuf would've allowed his parents to prostrate themselves before him (Asad 2003).

And this is most reasonable as God is being referred to in the previous ayat i.e If God Wills (Q12:99). Thus, if we stick to the context, we will have to reject the Israiliyat inspired explanation and conclude that the family of Yusuf prostrated to God in gratitude for being united with Yusuf. Now we will move on to the main subject of the paper. We will be able to see that the inclusion or exclusion of Israiliyaat can make a massive difference in our worldview. The origin of life has been a very sensitive topic in the modern muslim world. And much of the controversy relates back to the explanation of human procreation after Adam through the Israiliyaat literature.

DID GOD COMMAND THE CHILDREN OF ADAM TO COMMIT INCEST TO PROPAGATE HUMAN LINEAGE?

The Quran contains many *ayat* about the origin of humanity. But because the dominant narrative is the instantaneous creation of Adam from clay, the question of procreation is either left undiscussed or is attributed to incest committed by the children of Adam. This is a clear import from the bible. And it could be argued that much of the details explaining the Creation story in major Tafsirs come directly from the Bible through Israiliyaat. While there is nothing in the Quran or Sahih Hadith that discuss the incest story, it still is prevalent in some of the tafsir literature as the best contender to explain how the first humans procreated and

then multiplied. The narration is attributed to some of the Companions, while it could easily be a later induction from the Israiliyaat literature. In fact, the Bible contains multiple incidents of incest starting with the incest of Adam's children, then Noah with his son and then Lut with his daughters. It should be noted that in both cases of Adam's children and Lut's daughters, the *raison d'être* that is given is propagation of human lineage. While Muslim exegetes reject the latter, they accept the former.

The Quran mentions how all of humanity was created from a single *nafs*.

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one '*nafs*' (living being, person, human, soul, living entity, life essence) and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women." (Q 4:1).

While this word *nafs* has multiple meanings (soul, person, human being, self, living entity, living organism, life essence, etc) (Asad 2003). almost all classical exegetes explain this as the creation of Adam and the subsequent creation of his wife from his rib. Tabari is the first one to discuss the procreation of Adam's offspring by incest. Tabari's commentary is also one of the earliest examples of biblical influence on Quranic exegesis. It contains a compilation and methodological arrangements from the first two and a half centuries of Muslim exegesis. That makes him very important because he is used by later exegetes as an authority in tafsir.

Tabari narrated:

It was narrated from as-Suddi, in his narration from Abu Maalik and from Abu Saalih from Ibn 'Abbas, and from Murrâh from Ibn Mas'ood, and from some of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh): *"No son was born to Adam but a daughter would be born with him, and the boy from this pregnancy would marry the girl from another pregnancy, and the girl from this pregnancy would marry a boy from another pregnancy."* (Tabari, Abu Ja'far 2001).

This view was later picked up by other scholars. Ibn Hajar said:

"As-Suddi mentioned in his Tafsir, narrating from his shaykhs with his isnads, that the reason why Qabil killed his brother Habil was that Adam used to marry the male from each pregnancy to the female of another pregnancy, and that the sister of Qabil was more beautiful than the sister of Habil. Qabil wanted to keep his sister and marry her himself, but Adam did not let him, so when he insisted, he instructed them both to make an offering. Qabil offered a sheaf of corn, because he was a grower of crops, and Habil offered a fat lamb, because he kept livestock. Fire came down (from heaven) and consumed the offering of Habil, but not that of Qabil [i.e., Habil's offering was accepted and Qabil's was not], and that was the cause of the trouble between them. This is the well-known view." (Al Asqalani, Ibn Hajar 1980) This is exactly similar to Genesis 4:3-5 (NKJV).

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE ADAMIC INCEST STORY

The primary justifications that are presented for these absurdities in the Islamic literature are also very similar to the justifications given by Bible scholars i.e the laws were different for different generations and God had allowed incest in that time as a necessity to move human lineage forward.

Al-'Ayni said: Rulings were prescribed to serve people's interests, and were changed at different times. Undoubtedly marriage to sisters was permitted in the law of Adam (peace be upon him), and by means of that offspring were produced.

This is something that no one denies. Then that was abrogated in the laws of other prophets. (Al A'yni, Badruddin 1999).

Most of these scholars use this ayat to understand the differences in legal codes between different prophetic communities:

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way" (Q 5:48).

Ibn Taymiyah said: "What Allah has sent down is one religion, on which the Books and Messengers are agreed. They agreed on the fundamentals of religion and the basic principles of sharia, even though they differed in laws and ways, between that which abrogates and that which was abrogated. It is akin to the variety you find in a single book. In the beginning the Muslims were enjoined to

pray facing towards Bayt al-Maqdis [Jerusalem], then they were instructed to pray facing towards al-Masjid al-Haraam [Makkah], and in both cases they were only following what Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, had revealed." (Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqiuddin 1999).

"Allah sent the Messengers to show people how to attain what is in their best interests, and to abolish and reduce what is detrimental to their interests. With regard to everything that Allah and His Messenger enjoined, its benefits outweigh its harms, even if people dislike it." (Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqiuddin 2004)

So, a combination of divine command theory and *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of shariah) arguments are used to justify these absurd acts.

Does God command his servants to commit murder, incest and polytheism? The Quran unambiguously declares that God does not command evil actions and corruptions.

Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. (Q 16:90)

“Say, “Indeed, Allah does not order immorality. Do you say about Allah that you do not know?” (Q 7:28)

These are unambiguous and absolute statements that establish God never commands oppression, immorality or evil. So, it would be safe to say that God has established an objective moral code since the beginning of human history and He does not compromise on it. The Quran emphasizes that the 'sunnah' or way of God in dealing with creation does not alter. Evil is eliminated and good is rewarded. That proves that the Quran alludes to objective moral principles being laid down from the beginning of time.

"[Due to] arrogance in the land and plotting of evil; but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people. Then do they await except the way (Sunnah) of the former peoples? But you will never find in the way (Sunnah) of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way (Sunnah) of Allah any alteration. (35:43)

(This is) the way of Allah (sunnah of Allah) with those who passed away before, and you will not find any alteration in the way of Allah. (33.62)

But how can we understand Abrogation (*Nashkh*) in this light? The Quran holds that abrogation is not a massive leap from an immoral action being suddenly deemed as a morally correct action. Abrogation in law is when one morally correct action is replaced by another morally correct action because of certain relevant reasons. (Sheikh Imran Hosein 2016) Allah says,

"We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten but that We bring forth one better than it or like it. (Q 2:106)

For example, the abrogation of the Qiblah from Jerusalem to Mecca was not a jump from an immoral action to a moral action. Rather, both were holy sanctuaries. But God willed to distinguish the Muslim Ummah from the earlier communities of the Jews and Christians. Now for Muslims if praying towards Jerusalem is prohibited, it isn't so because it is a moral depravity. But because it has become a part of the Qur'anic text through a divine command. Whereas all kinds of injustice like human sacrifice, murder and immoralities like incest have always been considered prohibited. Expressions of polytheism like prostrating to a human being or object has always been prohibited for humans. So, to attribute these actions to God would be to attribute either contradiction or immorality or indecisiveness to God. And God is above all such human weaknesses. The Quran declares incest to be forbidden. "*Forbidden to you (for marriage) are: your mothers, your daughters, your sisters...*" (4:23). And it does not say that this act was allowed for a brief period in human history. In fact, in the same context, it declares that this used to be the way of the righteous among previous generations. "*Allah wants to make all this clear to you, and to guide you to the ways which the righteous have followed in the past*" (Q4:26). The Quran emphatically declares that it explains all things. So if we want to understand previous generations also, we can find it in the Quran (Q16:89), not in the Bible.

What is important to note is that the Quran does highlight the prohibition of murder when one of Adam's sons killed his brother. (Q 5:27).

Therefore, we see moral laws did exist at that time. So, if murder is prohibited why wouldn't incest be? If killing one's brother is wrong, why should committing sexual intercourse with one's younger or older sister be right? If it is the right of a brother to have his life protected, is it not the right of a sister/brother to have the sanctity of her relation protected? In the Quran we are even told how Adam and Eve on eating the fruit have their nakedness revealed so they cover themselves with leaves clearly proving that morality and ethics related to the opposite gender were imbibed in humans from the very beginning. So, the Quran does not support the idea that there was a bending of moral laws and incest was permitted for Adam's children.

Also, because the Christian tradition holds the Original Sin doctrine, they view the entire beginning of humanity as sourced in sin and disobedience starting from eating the forbidden fruit, to incest to murder of Abel by Cain. But in Islam there is no place for Original Sin thus it would be extremely problematic to assume that all of humanity including the best of creation, the Prophets and the Last Messenger (saw) are all products of incest. The fact that this incest story is neither in the Quran and nor in the Hadith, makes it even easier to dismiss it as a fabricated import from the Israiliyyaat literature. But its dismissal, while being absolutely necessary, brings in important questions. One of which is how did human lineage propagate then? What was the mechanism for the human race to move forward then?

EVOLUTION OR INCEST?

The incest story is nothing more than a fabrication as it purports that God commands immorality and all humans including the prophets and righteous are a product of a type of Freudian seduction theory. So, its dismissal is easy. But what are the ramifications of this? If the classical view of Adam being created

instantaneously from clay is taken to its logical conclusions, we arrive at a bottleneck. If he and his wife were the only two people on earth, how did procreation take place? We have a planet of 7 billion humans, how could they have been created if there were only two people at the beginning of human history and incest was prohibited?

It could be assumed that procreation from Adam's children onwards took place 'miraculously' through some creation miraculously created as their spouses with whom they had children and humanity multiplied. These go against the Quran as it says our spouses were created from our own kinds (*min anfusikum*), not some different creation.

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves (*min anfusikum*) mates that you may find tranquility in them.” (Q 30:21)

Or a fringe opinion known as Adamic Exceptionalism states that while Adam and Hawa were instantaneously created, there could be a possibility of other pre/co human beings existing before Adam and Hawa who came into being through evolution and with whom Adam's children may have procreated (Guessoum 2011). And all humanity eventually emerges from this one family. But this opinion directly conflicts with the *ayat* that all humanity came from a single living being (*nafsun wahida*) (Q 4:1). Whereas in Adamic Exceptionalism, the assumption is that somehow all humanity came from a combination of instantaneously created species like Adam and Hawa and evolutionary species like their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. And it would also have to assume that somehow just this one family survived, and all the other human beings created out of evolution perished. All of this is conjecture, neither substantiated by the Quran nor by Evolutionary Biology. And the Quran emphasizes that Adam, just like all other humans and the rest of the creation is *khalq* (creation) (Q 7:12, 3:59). And then says the origin of *khalq* will be found on earth through observation (i.e science) (29:20) So to differentiate between the process of creation of Adam and the process of creation of the other family members is mere sophistry.

Life could not have procreated from just one human couple who was bound by the Shariah as there would be no incest between their children. Thus, there have to be other humans on earth along with Adam and his wife and it is with them, the children of Adam were married. And this is the essence of Muslim Evolutionism.

Muslim Evolutionism begins with the premise that the origin of mankind can be understood by studying proofs from the earth. Adam is *khalq* or creation and the origin of creation can be found by traveling the earth and observing i.e using the scientific spirit to study the origin of creation/life.

“Say, “Travel through the land and ‘observe’ how He began creation.”
(Q29:20)

And a scientific study of life does give overwhelming evidence to support the idea of common ancestry. All life on earth is connected and originates from one common ancestor or LUCA (Last universal common ancestor). (Theobald 2010) Muslim evolutionists read this ayat accordingly: *“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one nafs (living being) and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women.”* (Q4:1)

The word *nafs* cannot be restricted to just human beings as the Quran says every *nafs* tastes death (Q 3:185). It’s not just human beings who taste death, instead every form of life from a single cell to a plant or animal tastes death. Thus, this single *nafs* could be the last common ancestor or the primordial cell from which all life emerged and then subsequently human beings emerged and Adam was the most perfect of them, directly chosen by God.

Medieval as well as modern Muslim scholars who lean towards Evolution adopt a symbolic interpretive approach to the *ayat* that talk about the origin of life and the scholars who reject evolution prefer a literalist interpretation of the same verses. And since all the *ayat* that describe origin in essence are describing events that took place in the past by virtue of which they pertain to the unseen world (*al-*

ghayb), therefore these verses are ambiguous (*mutashabihhaat*) and therefore invite multiple interpretations.

Other *ayat* that talk about how the creation of life was a phase-by-phase temporal process are as follows:

"While He has created you in stages." (Q 71:14)

"Allah caused you (O humanity) to grow from the earth like a plant." (Q 71:17)

In the same surah and thus the same context Allah says that human beings were created as vegetation from the earth which could be understood as one phase (emergence of plant species 500 million years ago) in the long evolutionary process that eventually led to human beings.

It is popularly assumed that the previous *ayat* is talking about the creation of the human in the womb. But when it is read along with this succeeding *ayat* and thus within its context, one can clearly see it's talking about the evolutionary process.

It is important to note that Muslim scientists centuries before Lamarck, Darwin and Spencer wrote extensively on concepts like natural selection, deep time, abiogenesis, adaptation, heredity and common ancestry, all of which are intrinsic to contemporary biological Evolution. Some of the important names are Ibn Khaldun, Nasir ad Din Tusi, Ibn Miskhaway, Ibn Tufail and Al Jahiz. Some mystics and gnostics from the Islamic Intellectual age also wrote on concepts of the evolution of Adam over time like Ibn Arabi, Rumi and Ikhwan As Saffa (Malik. H.A, Ziermann, M.J, and Diogo. R 2021). In fact, Muslim association with evolutionary ideas must have been so widely known by intellectuals that even Darwin's contemporary John William Draper in his 1874 book titled *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, referred to proto evolutionary ideas as "*the Mohammedan theory of the evolution of man from lower forms*" (Draper, John William 1874). The conflict thesis emerged from the colonized Muslim world in the 19th century. As it was severed from its historical tradition, it easily

imbibed Christian aversion to evolutionary ideas, understandably so. We did see that much of the Muslim exegesis material on Creation draws from the Israiliyyaat. Thus, when the Bible conflicted with science, it made issues for Muslims as well.

However, since the 20th century Muslim scholars have produced multiple responses to Evolution ranging from complete acceptance (Muslim/Theistic Evolutionism) to complete rejection (Instantaneous Creation) as well as two intermediate positions (Adamic and Human Exceptionalism). Muslim Evolutionism or Theistic Evolutionism has been propounded by various Muslim intellectuals like Iqbal, Abdus Sabbur Shaheen, Hussain Jisr, Jamal ud Din Afghani, Mohamed Abduh, Adnan Ibrahim, Nidhal Guessoum, T.O Shanavas, Rana Dajani and others (Guessoum, t.t.). The core idea behind it is that humans are the product of God-directed evolutionary processes that took place over billions of years. There were no random and blind processes, but divine wisdom and power at work that created all life from a single common ancestor. And these scholars interpret the *ayat* on the origin of life accordingly. The question of Evolution from the Quranic perspective boils down to how Divine Agency operates in the physical world? Does it operate instantaneously, or do we observe it over long periods of time? So clearly, we can see that Evolution brings in the perennial mystery of Time with it. Iqbal presents a viable solution by suggesting that while for God this entire process of creation, may be a result of a single command of Be ! whereas for us the same process appears to be billions of years long (Q 22:47) (Iqbal dan Majeed 2013). This is something that is mentioned in the Quran in relation to God's command and the earthly years and it harmoniously unites creationism with evolutionism.

But comparing the two options of suggesting that God commanded believers (Adam's children) to commit incest or accepting that all of life emerged from a common ancestor that eventually led to Adam, the latter is not only reasonable and substantiated by demonstrable science but also is true to the Quranic spirit.

CONCLUSION

Both the Quran and the Hadith discourage Muslims from taking knowledge from Biblical sources. However, within the first few generations Biblical narratives penetrated the Islamic tradition through the narrations of early converts to Islam from the Judeo-Christian tradition. This literature is called the *Israiliyaat*. Much of these narrations are fabrications. Three such adaptations from the *Israiliyaat* were studied in this paper- the sacrificial lamb story, the prostration of Prophet Yaqub to Prophet Yusuf and finally the incest of Adam's children. The last one is studied deeply to identify its source in the Biblical literature.

And most importantly, the implications this incest story has for the non-contradictory nature of the Quran, the divinely ordained objective moral order of the Quran and the view of God as an upholder of piety and destroyer of immorality. Since the incest story is neither in the Quran nor in the hadith, and moreover it clashes head on with the Quranic message, its dismissal is necessary.

But its dismissal brings in another potent question. If there were just two humans on earth, and incest is completely out of the question, then how did their lineage progress? Thus it becomes a necessity in such a scenario to assume that there were other humans along with Adam and Eve on earth. And this idea is Muslim Evolutionism. This view is proved to be more Quranic in spirit and conforms with rationality and demonstrable scientific evidence. Since the Quran, the human intellect and the physical universe are all the creations of Allah, therefore the Quran can never conflict with demonstrable scientific proof. If it does, it could be a result of human error in interpretation. And in this case, we see how it was the import of unreliable Biblical narratives that created a conflict. Muslims face two choices, one is to accept the biblical narrative of the incest story which is unislamic, bizarre and false. And the other is to accept demonstrable scientific evidence. Finally, the position of Muslim Evolutionism is explained briefly and an effort has been made through this paper to open avenues of critical thinking and scientific rationality in the process of explaining the Quran.

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