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Prophethood in the Abrahamic Faiths: A Comparative Study of the Divine Missions and Moral Teachings of Moses (AS), Jesus (AS), and Muhammad (PBUH)

ABSTRACT

As like the concept of God, the concept of prophet hood holds great importance in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The prophets served as God's messengers for the guidance of humanity toward monotheism, social reform and moral well being. This is a comparative study which examines the teachings and roles of Moses AS, Jesus AS, and Muhammad PBUH and explores their divine missions and excellent values they shared for humanity. Moses AS in Judaism is considered as a leader and lawgiver for the Israelites who provided the foundational moral laws. Jesus AS in Christianity is both a prophet and Messiah who emphasized moral transformation and spiritual salvation. Muhammad PBUH in Islam is the final prophet of God towards humanity whose revelation is the Qur'an that serves as a comprehensive and complete guide for all people and nations of the world. He PBUH refined the some beliefs of Christianity and Judaism which were corrupted by their followers within passage of time. This analysis explores the shared and distinct aspects of prophet hood in Abrahamic Faiths and highlights the importance and impact of these holy figures for the development of faith, societal values and ethics for humanity.

Keywords: Prophet hood; Abrahamic traditions; Moses AS; Jesus AS; Muhammad PBUH; Comparative religion; Islam; Christianity, Judaism

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Introduction

The concept of prophethood has central importance in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to Abrahamic faiths prophets as messengers are appointed by God to guide people. In these religions, prophets like Moses AS, Jesus AS, and Muhammad PBUH has unique roles and they teach divine law and moral guidance to the people. They convey God's messages with their own examples and virtues to the followers. This comparative research reveals the nature and importance of prophet hood via the practical lives of these three holy figures. Each is revered in their religious contexts as supreme model of leadership and faith. Prophethood as described in Abrahamic faiths is a profound responsibility to convey monotheism, motivate people for justice and call for social reform eliminating evils from the society. In Judaism Moses AS is seen as conveyer of law of God to the people of Israelites which is fundamental role to Jewish theology and identity. Jesus AS in Christianity is considered a prophet and the Messiah whose practical life and teachings are bases to Christian doctrine. Muhammad PBUH is the final prophet who completed the divine mission of all previous prophets and whose revelation is the Qur'an that confirms and completes the messages of his predecessors. This study examines these roles focusing on primary sources and scholarly interpretations of these religions to explore the commonalities and distinctions in these three revered prophets.

Prophethood in Judaism

Moses AS, or *Musa* in Arabic has an important place in Judaism as the greatest lawgiver and prophet. His mission and life are basically described in the Torah, specifically in the books of Leviticus, Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In Judaism, Moses AS is considered as the conveyer of God's will who is chosen to guide the Israelites and save them from Egyptian bondage and to convey the Ten Commandments that make the ethical base of Jewish law. The Exodus describes Moses' AS divine encounter at the burning bush where God commanded him to liberate the Israelites from Egyptians and hold a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. This covenant solidifies the Israelites as God's chosen people and provides the base for a religious society which is governed by divine law.¹

Scholars have analyzed the role of Moses AS in Jewish and Islamic perspectives, He AS consistently described as a model of spiritual and moral and spiritual. Brannon Wheeler in *Moses in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis* describes that Moses' AS story in Islam parallels his role in Judaism specifically in his motivation to people for adherence to divine law and social justice.² This study highlights the respect and dignity for Moses AS as a spiritual leader and moral guide, emphasizing the shared respect for his prophetic mission in the Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In Jewish tradition the concept of prophet hood holds a central role, highlighting the relationship between Humanity and God. Prophets are intermediaries who convey God's guidance and maintain the legal and moral standards that make the foundation of Jewish religion. Moses AS, in Judaism is considered as a most important figure that communicated God's commandments and served as a model of spiritual leadership and obedience. Islam reveres Moses AS prophet of God and gives significant importance on prophet hood and recognizes prophets as key figures who guide societies towards moral betterment and monotheism.

In Judaism a prophet (*navi*) is the one who is chosen by God to convey God's messages to Israelites. The Tanakh specifically the books of the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) that contains detailed accounts of prophets like Moses AS and other prophets who delivered God's word in times of moral decay and crisis. Prophets were considered as forecasters for future and as social

¹ Exodus 3: 1-15, The Torah

² Brannon M. Wheeler, *Moses in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis* (London: Routledge, 2002), 24-30.

reformers and critics. Their role was to call Israelites back to the covenantal relationship that was established with God at Mount Sinai which ensures adherence to the divine laws and ethical standards that define identity of Jewish people.³

The Torah describes the earliest depictions of prophethood with Moses AS being the prophet of God. In *Deuteronomy* 34:10, Moses AS is mentioned as a prophet "whom the LORD knew face to face," describing his closeness to God. According to the Talmud, this distinction makes Moses AS a respectful position in prophet hood.⁴ Rashi a renowned medieval Jewish commentator interprets this passage to mean that Moses had a high level of prophecy.⁵

In Jewish tradition, Moses AS is revered as the great prophet because of his role in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt and his reception of the Torah on Mount Sinai. The Torah consists of ritual commandments and moral law which is central to Jewish belief and life. Moses AS role in its transmission of revelation marks him as most important figure in Jewish history. The *Book of Exodus* describes Moses' AS encounter with God where he received his prophetic teachings and instructions to liberate the people of Israel from the slavery of Egyptian people.⁶ This event is considered most crucial in Jewish theology as it establishes Moses' AS authority as a prophet of God and approves his mission as a deliverer.

Maimonides has described the nature of Moses' AS prophecy. In his seminal work, *Guide for the Perplexed*, he categorized different levels of prophecy with Moses' AS prophecy being revered because of its clarity and lack of symbolic vision. Maimonides describes that Moses' prophecy was characterized by direct communication with God.⁷ This great distinction reinforces shows that Moses was selected for an extraordinary mission and he exemplified the high regard and respect that he hold within Judaism.

Jewish prophets served as social reformers and called the Israelites to repentance and warning against social inequality and injustices. Jewish Prophets admonished the people of Israel for pursuing idolatry and neglecting the poor while emphasizing the ethical demands of the covenant that they made with God.⁸ This moral aspect of prophet hood is specifically important as it places the prophet as a spiritual guide and as an advocate for peace and justice. The prophets' messages and teachings were used to remind the people of Israel about their obligations under the Mosaic covenant that focused in the obedience to God including excellent ethical treatment with others.

The book of Isaiah for example condemns the people for their hypocrisy in practicing religious rituals and neglecting compassion and justice. Isaiah 1:17, calls on people of Israel to "learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."⁹ This focus on social ethics shows the broader role of prophets in Judaism as guardians of moral law and religious rituals.

Islamic Perspective on Jewish Prophets

Islamic tradition regards Moses AS (Musa) as one of the greatest prophets and reveres the importance of his great mission. The Qur'an mentioned Moses AS more than any of other prophet which emphasizes his role in guiding of the people of Israel, his miracles and reception of divine commandments. In Islam, Moses is considered a prophet for the Children of Israel

³ "Deuteronomy 34:10," *The Torah*.

⁴ Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 49b.

⁵ Rashi, Commentary on *Deuteronomy 34:10*, in *the Torah with Rashi's Commentary*.

⁶ "Exodus 3:1-10," *The Torah*.

⁷ Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 2:35.

⁸ "Amos 5:21-24," *The Torah*.

⁹ "Isaiah 1:17," *The Torah*.

and a model of humility, steadfastness and obedience to Allah's will. The Qur'an provides several accounts of Moses' life that aligns with the narratives found in the Torah.¹⁰

The Concept of Prophethood in Islam

Prophethood in Islam shows many similarities with Jewish concepts as prophets are considered as spiritual and moral guides that are appointed by God. The prophets are responsible of conveying Allah's message to people and calling humanity to monotheism (*tawhid*) and good ethical conduct. Islamic teachings show that God sent prophets toward every nation and Moses AS was an important figure among these prophets who exemplified dedication and sincerity to God's justice and guidance.¹¹

Muslim scholars have described Moses' AS role in Islamic tradition. In *Moses in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis* Brannon Wheeler describes how Muslim exegetes interpret the narrative about Moses AS and focused on his mission as both a reformer and lawgiver. Wheeler mentions that while the Islamic perspective acknowledges Moses' AS role in Jewish history it also describes the universal nature of his message.¹² This universalism resembles with the Islam that prophethood is a recurring divine institution that intended to recall humanity about their duties to God and for the well being of society.

The Miracles of Moses AS

In Judaism and Islam miracles are important in to establish a prophet's authority. The Qur'an mentions several miracles by Moses AS with the will of God such as the transformation of his staff into a serpent and the parting of the Red Sea. These signs are demonstrations of God's power and Moses' AS legitimacy as a prophet. In *Exodus*, the parting of the Red Sea is described as a central event that symbolizes the liberation and God's intervention for the Israelites.¹³ Islamic sources similarly describe these events and view them as the God's support for Moses AS and his mission.¹⁴

Islamic teachings describe these miracles as historical events and as symbols of resilience and faith. The Qur'an emphasizes the moral lessons that are derived from Moses' AS perseverance and reliance on Allah in the face of great adversity. This perspective is described commentaries, by Al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir, who interpret Moses' miracles as evidence of God's support and favor and source to inspire faith among the followers.¹⁵

Prophethood in Christianity

In Christianity Jesus AS (which is known as *Isa* AS in Islamic tradition) is revered as the Son of God and the awaited Messiah. Islam describes the Jesus AS only a messenger of God like other messengers. Both Islam and Judaism refute the trinity belief of Christianity which was later developed by the Christian followers and not by Jesus AS. His religious teachings, miracles, and sacrificial death are described in the New Testament, specifically in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus' AS message focuses on the themes of compassion, love and repentance, and the coming paradise of God. His Sermon on the Mount is a central

¹⁰ Qur'an 28:3-44

¹¹ Qur'an 10:47

¹² Brannon M. Wheeler, *Moses in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15-20.

¹³ "Exodus 14:21-31," *The Torah*.

¹⁴ Qur'an 26:63-67

¹⁵ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, ed. Muhammad Saed Abdul-Rahman (London: MSA Publication Limited, 2009), vol. 3, 200-205.

text within Christian ethics that presents a vision of divine law that emphasizes inner transformation and moral refinement.¹⁶

Kenneth E. Bailey, in *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, describes how Jesus' AS teachings resembles with his contemporary Jewish audience which highlights his emphasis on forgiveness, humility and social justice.¹⁷ Unlike Moses AS, whose mission was the establishment of a religious legal system, Jesus' AS mission emphasized on spiritual salvation and preparation of believers for eternal life with God. The difference in their divine missions shows broader theological differences between Jewish and Christian tradition. In Christianity the Prophet Jesus AS is believed as son of God and part of God which is opposed both by Judaism and Islam.

Prophethood in Islam: Muhammad PBUH

In Islam, Muhammad PBUH is the final prophet in a long line of God's messengers sent to guide the people of their areas and time. The final prophet Muhammad is not specific for a specific nation or time. His is mercy for whole humanity and his message is final message of God to humanity. After him, no prophet will come. He is seal of all prophets. His prophetic mission as mentioned in the Qur'an emphasizes the unity of God, compassion and social justice for the poor. Muhammad's PBUH revelation was over 23 years which is preserved in the Qur'an and Muslims believe to be the literal word of Allah. The Qur'an acknowledges the chain previous prophets including Moses AS and Jesus AS and positioning Muhammad PBUH as the seal of all prophets who verifies their divine link and books as well as completes the divine guidance for whole humanity.¹⁸

In *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, Tariq Ramadan describes Muhammad's PBUH role as a leader who was committed to mercy and justice with traits that show his prophetic mission.¹⁹ Muhammad's PBUH life was characterized by his dedication to best moral conduct and community development which shows Islam's emphasis on living in accordance with the divine will. His role as the final prophet is a theological closure to the concept of prophet hood that affirms in the Qur'an which is the comprehensive and final revelation towards humanity. His prophet hood establishes a divine standard of moral and ethical guidance that transcends temporal, individual and societal boundaries. The validation of his prophet hood highlights the theological, philosophical, and humanitarian perspectives that are not blessing for Muslims but for whole humanity.

Theological Justification of Muhammad's (PBUH) Prophethood

From a theological viewpoint, the Qur'an is the primary proof of Muhammad's (PBUH) prophet hood. It is the save book of God for more than 1400 years which is the literal word of God, revealed over 23 years through the Angel Gabriel. It is the only book in the world whose every word is saved. The responsibility of its protection is taken by Allah Himself. It is a living miracle not only for Muslim but for the people of whole world. Unlike previous holy books, which Muslims believe were specific to certain communities and nations, the Qur'an is a message for all the humanity and it is considered as a universal message. The Qur'an, in *Surah Al-Baqarah* 2:23, challenges skeptics to produce a chapter equal to it, thereby establishing itself as inimitable and divinely protected from corruption.²⁰ Theologically, the Qur'an is considered

¹⁶ Matthew 5-7, The New Testament

¹⁷ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 45-52.

¹⁸ Qur'an 33:40

¹⁹ Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63-72.

²⁰ Qur'an 2:23

as Muhammad's (PBUH) greatest miracle. Its moral depth, linguistic precision and prophetic statements have been subjects of extensive study in Muslim and non-Muslim scholars of the world. Islam holds that the Qur'an's miraculous nature verifies Muhammad's (PBUH) claim to prophet hood as the revelation surpasses the capabilities of even the most skilled Arab orators and poets of his time.²¹

Muhammad (PBUH) in Previous Scriptures

The prophet hood of Muhammad (PBUH) was foretold in earlier holy books. In *Surah Al-A'raf* 7:157 it is described that the coming of Muhammad (PBUH) was mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel suggesting that his prophet hood completes the line of Abrahamic prophets.²² Scholars have debated passages in the Bible that refer to Muhammad (PBUH) that include the references in *Deuteronomy* 18:18, where God promises to raise a prophet "like unto Moses." Islamic interpreters argue that the description fits Muhammad (PBUH), specifically given his role as a leader and lawgiver.²³

Islamic scholar Dr. Zakir Naik argues that parallels between Muhammad (PBUH) and figures described in earlier scriptures show continuity in divine guidance. The fulfillment of these prophecies within the Islamic tradition is seen as a theological testament to the authenticity of Muhammad's (PBUH) mission and the unity of the Abrahamic prophetic message.²⁴

Logical Consistency and Rationality of Muhammad's (PBUH) Teachings

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exhibit a coherent philosophy of life that addresses various dimensions of human existence: ethical, spiritual, legal and societal. His teachings highlight reason and understanding, as exemplified in the Qur'an's repeated encouragement to ponder upon the creation and seek knowledge and in-depth understanding. For instance, *Surah Al-Imran* 3:191 urges believers to reflect upon the universe, which aligns with the rational tradition in Islamic thought.²⁵

Philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina have argued that Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings provide a rational foundation for societal organization and ethical conduct, rooted in the principles of mercy, justice and human dignity. They described that his prophet hood aligns with the philosophical concept of an ideal ruler or "philosopher-king" who guides society towards a harmonious existence grounded in ethical values.²⁶ Muhammad's (PBUH) prophethood appeals to faith and invites intellectual engagement, embodying a balance between divine revelation and human reasoning.

The Ethical Paradigm of Prophethood

Muhammad's (PBUH) life exemplifies the ideal of moral conduct which is an essential component of his philosophical legacy. His commitment to honesty, justice and compassion has been widely acknowledged and even by those outside the Islamic religion. For example, Mahatma Gandhi admired the Prophet's principles of integrity and nonviolence, stating that Muhammad (PBUH) "had a wonderful power of understanding and guiding men."²⁷ The

²¹ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), 45-47.

²² Qur'an 7:157

²³ *Deuteronomy* 18:18, The Holy Bible.

²⁴ Zakir Naik, *The Concept of God in Major Religions* (Mumbai: IRF Press, 1997), 65-68.

²⁵ Qur'an 3:191

²⁶ Al-Farabi, *The Political Regime*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 39-41.

²⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, October 2, 1924.

Prophet's ethical example is a model that promotes moral development and encourages individual integrity.

Philosophically his teachings emphasize that true knowledge of God necessitates ethical action. This belief is mentioned in *Surah Al-Baqarah* 2:177, which describes righteousness as adherence to compassionate conduct and belief. Such teachings present a coherent ethical framework, where the essence of faith is expressed through kindness and justice, emphasizing Muhammad's (PBUH) role as an ethical leader and guide for whole humanity.

The Humanitarian Contribution of Muhammad's (PBUH) Prophethood

One of the most compelling aspects of Muhammad's PBUH prophethood is his transformative impact on society. His message promoted human rights, equality, and compassion at a time when tribalism and social hierarchy dominated the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet PBUH emphasized the equality of all humans, stating in his Farewell Sermon: "All mankind is from Adam and Eve... an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab."²⁸ This message of universal equality reflects a commitment to the intrinsic dignity of every human being is a principle that continues to inspire movements for social justice worldwide.

Muhammad's PBUH teachings on human rights extend to specific protections for vulnerable groups that include women, orphans, and slaves. The Qur'an, in *Surah An-Nisa* 4:1, emphasizes the importance of family and societal responsibility towards weaker members, setting forth guidelines that highlight compassion and respect.²⁹ This approach to social justice aligns with humanitarian ideals, marking Muhammad's PBUH legacy as compassion and equality as foundational values.

Contributions to Science and Knowledge

Another lasting aspect of Muhammad's PBUH legacy is his encouragement of knowledge. The Prophet's emphasis on learning is evidenced by his famous saying, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim."³⁰ This principle catalyzed an intellectual movement within the Muslim world, resulting in significant advances in science, medicine, philosophy, and literature during the Islamic Golden Age. The philosophical and scientific works of Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Al-Khwarizmi, and Al-Ghazali were instrumental in the development of Western intellectual traditions, demonstrating the far-reaching influence of Muhammad's PBUH motivation for knowledge.

Islamic teachings on knowledge have been recognized for their role in fostering an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. The Qur'an's emphasis on empirical observation and rational inquiry (*Surah Al-Mulk* 67:3-4) has been credited as a foundational influence on Islamic and global scientific advancements. These contributions underscore Muhammad's (PBUH) prophethood as one that not only shaped Islamic civilization but also made a lasting impact on human progress and development.

A Universal Message for Humanity

The universality of Muhammad's (PBUH) message is a key aspect of its humanitarian appeal. Islam's core tenet of *tawhid* (monotheism) advocates for a personal and direct relationship with God, which transcends ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status. This inclusivity is

²⁸ Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book 56, Hadith 30.

²⁹ Qur'an 4:1

³⁰ Ibn Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Book 1, Hadith 224.

particularly evident in the Prophet's mission to unify various tribes and nations under a single, ethical framework. His teaching that "the best of you are those who are best to their families"³¹ emphasizes the importance of kindness, establishing Muhammad's (PBUH) message as one that promotes harmonious social relationships.

Comparative Analysis of Prophet hood

When comparing Moses AS, Jesus AS, and Muhammad PBUH, it becomes evident that while each served unique roles within their traditions, they also shared common themes of almighty God, compassion, and justice. Moses AS is associated with legalistic and covenantal aspects of faith, Jesus AS with a spiritual and transformative message, and Muhammad PBUH with social justice and the finality of divine guidance. These thematic overlaps highlight how the prophets, despite theological differences, collectively contribute to a broader narrative of divine instruction aimed at moral and spiritual elevation.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad illustrates the profound role of prophet hood in the Abrahamic faiths that emphasizes the shared commitment to existence of almighty God, justice, and moral leadership. Each prophet's life and teachings reflect unique aspects of their mission: Moses AS as the lawgiver who established a covenantal community; Jesus AS as the spiritual redeemer focused on inner transformation; and Muhammad PBUH as the final prophet and mercy for whole mankind, whose guidance remains central to Islam's theological and moral framework. These prophets provided religious laws and exemplified virtues and leadership that continue to inspire their followers. This study emphasizes the convergence of core values, faith, social responsibility, and ethical conduct in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, offering a basis for mutual respect and understanding among these religious communities. The timeless teachings of these prophets thus resonate as a call for interfaith dialogue, focusing on shared values and fostering harmony across diverse religious landscapes.

³¹ Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' at-Tirmidhi*, Book 27, Hadith 326.