

PROPHET JONAH BETWEEN THE BIBLE AND THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

Haleema Sadia¹, Janas Khan², Syed Naeem Badshah³, Karim Dad⁴, Khadija Aziz⁵

¹GGDC, Nowshera. ²GDC, Mathra, Peshawar. ³ICP University, Peshawar.

⁴AWKU, Mardan. ⁵Peshawar University.

PAKISTAN

syenbs@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The Qur'ān says, "Surely in the narratives of these, there is a lesson for the people of understanding". The noble Qur'ān quotes significant incidents and actions of the noble Prophets for certain specific goals. The article, "Prophet Jonah between the Bible and the Qur'ān" is a comparative study, which focuses on the similarities and differences between the stage to stage developments of the story of Prophet Jonah as described in the Bible and the Qur'an. It also explains at the end, the lessons derived from the story for healthier society.

Keywords: Prophet Jonah, Bible, Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

Prophet Jonah was among the children of Israel, from Benjamin tribeⁱ. . He was appointed as a messengerⁱⁱ for the inhabitants of Ninevehⁱⁱⁱ, in the land of *Mūṣal*^{iv}, a town in Iraq.^v One of its mounds bears the name of, "The Tomb of *Nabī Yūnas*".^{vi} He is also called as "Lord of the fish" (*Dhunnūn*) or the "companion of the fish" (*ṣāhib al-Hūt*).^{vii} The present article discusses the life of Prophet Jonah as described in the Bible and the *Qur'ān*. It also deals with, the similarities and differences in the Divine narration, and the lessons which can be deduced from Prophet Jonah story.

Similarities and Differences:

1. In both the Bible^{viii} and the *Qur'ān*^{ix} Jonah was a prophet.
2. In the Bible God told Jonah to go to Nineveh^x, and preach its inhabitants?^{xi} He was supposed to warn the Nineveh to repent^{xii}. The *Qur'ān* does not mention the names of the place.

Message

Jonah's people persisted in disbelief for a long time. He warned them to leave the town, as the Devine scourge would befall on them in the next three days.^{xiii} They were asked to worship One God. They refused his invitation by saying that how can they abandon their forefathers way of worshipping? Prophet Jonah explained to them with wisdom, that these idols can not deserve to be worshipped^{xiv}. His entire struggle to invite his people toward the oneness of God was in vain. They were neither afraid of His torment nor did they believe in Jonah and his God^{xv}.

Similarities and Differences:

1. In the Bible^{xvi} when God told Jonah to moralize Nineveh about God, he instead took off

- for Tarshish, Spain. While in the *Qur'ān* he fled towards the laden ship.^{xvii}
2. In the Bible, Jonah knew God's nature that if he preached repentance to the Ninevites. His nation would ask repent and God would spare them^{xviii}. While it is not supported by the *Qur'ān*.

The Two Believers

Prophet Jonah continued preaching for thirty three years to more than hundred thousand idolaters but there were only two believers^{xix}. They were both pious men.^{xx}

Similarities and Differences:

1. In the Bible^{xxi}, the king of Nineveh with his nobles announced to let men and beast be hungry. They wore sack clothes and cry mighty unto God. The *Qur'ān* also says that Jonah nation repented to God^{xxii}

Request for Chastisement

Prophet Jonah thought that he had fulfilled his mission. He felt that his invitation did not have any effect. He lost all hopes, hence he requested God for chastisement^{xxiii}. He warned his people to left the town, as the divine scourge would befall upon them within next three days.^{xxiv} He was guided to wait and keep patience to his people.^{xxv} After sometime, when his warning was not heeded by his people, He invoked God's wrath on his people and departed.^{xxvi}

Similarities and Differences:

1. In both the Bible^{xxvii} and the *Qur'ān*^{xxviii} the nation (Nineveh) asked repentance and was spared by God.
2. In the Bible^{xxix} Prophet Jonah built himself a little shelter outside the town. He was so angry that he rather wanted death than life. The *Qur'ān* however says, he went away in an angry mood.^{xxx}
3. In the Bible^{xxxi} When the Nineveh was spared Jonah marched away from the situation, angry at God. Islamic traditions said, "Nobody has the right to say that I am better than Jonah bin Matta."^{xxxxii}
4. In the Bible^{xxxiii} Prophet Jonah flee first and then came to the Nineveh and warned them. While In the *Qur'ān* he fled after preaching but without God's permission.^{xxxiv}

Torment

Prophet Jonah departed from the town, thus prompted his people to review their attitude. When he left, the signs of Almighty God's torment appeared among the people of the tribe^{xxxv}. The sky went dark and the terrible storm started which caused the people of the tribe to realize, what a great mistake they had made^{xxxvi}. The two faithful men asked them to repent and have faith in God and His Prophet, "Jonah"^{xxxvii}. They repented and sought forgiveness from God^{xxxviii}. They went to the mountains for prayers^{xxxix}. Following this, all men and women, young and old, boys and girls rushed to the desert to pray and moan to Almighty God and ask His greatness. They asked God's refuge from torment^{xli}. They were praying in such a loud voice that their moaning and cries could be heard all over the desert^{xlii}.

Similarities and Differences:

1. In the Bible^{xlii} the king ordered his nation, to fast, put on sack clothes and seek forgiveness. While in the Quran the king is not mentioned.
2. In the Bible^{xliii} God told Jonah to preach again to the Ninavites for seeking God's repentance. Jonah acted, as was told and amazingly the people repented. It is not mentioned in the *Qur'ān*.

Almighty God Mercy

The people of Jonah made a genuine repentance. Almighty God accepted it and the scourge were removed from them.^{xliv} He blessed them with His kindness and mercy, because of their sincere repentance and their determination to tread on the right path. So the black clouds scattered gradually, and then the clear blue sky began to appear.^{xlv}

Similarities and Differences:

1. In the *Qur'ān*, the people of Jonah, when they believed, God removed from them the punishments in the worldly life. He let them enjoy themselves.^{xvi}
2. In the Bible^{xvii} God told Jonah that Nineveh has more than one lace twenty thousand people living in religious darkness. While In the *Qur'ān*^{xviii} Almighty God sent Prophet Jonah to one hundred thousand or more people.
3. In the Bible^{xix} God told Jonah that Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness. Should not he felt sorry for such a great city?"

In the Ship

Prophet Jonah set out to migrate to another place without waiting for a clear instruction from God.¹ The Devine wisdom did not find his decision in accordance with the high station of a prophet^{li}. Jonah went towards the seashore. He boarded on an overloaded ship.^{lii} After sailing to some extent, the ship faced the danger of sinking.^{liii} The people suspected a runaway slave on the ship^{liv} because in those days people believe that if a runaway slave is on the ship, it would sink^{lv}. In order to select the person they drew lots. The lots fell on him^{lvi}. It identified Jonah as a runaway slave and the reason for the sinking ship. The passengers cast the lot again, but it fell on his name again. Nobody was ready to believe him as a runaway slave because he looked so decent and pious. They did it for the third time but the result was just the same. At this time Prophet Jonah realized that he was probably put into this trouble for leaving his tribe without God's permission^{lvii}. At last they cast him into the river.^{lviii}

Similarities and Differences:

1. In the Bible Jonah hops on a boat headed for Tar shish, attempting to put out of God's sight. At night, a huge storm came up and stirred the boat violently. The sailors got afraid and started to pray to their gods. Jonah was sleeping soundly below the deck.^{lx} In the *Qur'ān* Jonah ran towards the boat that was already loaded.^{lx}
2. In both the *Qur'ān*^{xi} and the Bible^{lxii} Jonah participated in drawing lot
3. In the *Qur'ān* Jonah participated in drawing lot and was defeated.^{lxiii} While In the Bible the captain went down to Jonah's compartment and drew him out of bed. "They said to one another, "Come, and let us cast lots, so that we may know the reason for the trouble." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Prophet Jonah."^{lxiv}

4. In the Bible the sailors asked question from Jonah as to what he had done to cause storm on them. He confessed and told the sailors to throw him overboard to save their lives^{lxv}. They did the same. While the *Qur'ān* says he was swallowed by the fish,^{lxvi} with which we can infer that he was thrown in water.

In the Fish

Jonah thought there had to be a divine wisdom behind the event. He jumped into the sea. God commanded a huge fish to swallow Jonah^{lxvii}. He ordered the fish not to eat his flesh.^{lxviii} He was supposed to be kept for some time^{lxix} in the stomach of the fish as a prisoner with his flesh and bones unharmed.^{lxx} The fish was swimming deep down in the sea through the dark water^{lxxi}. There, Jonah was suffering grief and great sorrow^{lxxii}. He, in that state of depression took refuge from God and started praying to Him in darkness^{lxxiii}.

Similarities and Differences:

1. In both the Bibl^{lxxiv}e and the *Qur'ān*^{lxxv} as Jonah was drowning into the sea, a big fish swallowed him.
2. In the *Qur'ān* if Jonah had not proclaimed God's Purity, he would stay in the fish belly till the day when the dead will be raised.^{lxxvi} It is not mentioned in the Bible.

Repentance

Almighty God accepted Jonah prayers. He was thrown by the fish at a shore.^{lxxvii} When he came out of the fish he was sick^{lxxviii}. He found that he could not stand the heat of the sun which was somehow burning his skin.^{lxxix} He got extremely weak. So God commanded a gourd plant to grow over him.^{lxxx} He could now rest in the shade of its leaves and be protected against the Sun and the flies^{lxxxi}. A wild goat used to come and feed Jonah by God's Command to regain his lost strength.^{lxxxii}

Similarities and Differences:

1. In the Bible Prophet Jonah sat in the whale's belly for three days and nights. He spends that time in prayer, thanking God for saving him. Jonah recognized the miracle that God saved him. He was truly grateful. Prophet Jonah was sincere in his prayer.^{lxxxiii} In the *Qur'ān*, also he was sincere in his prayers^{lxxxiv}. Thus God cast him in wilderness in a reproachable state^{lxxxv}.
2. In the *Qur'ān*^{lxxxvi} Almighty God cast him (Prophet Jonah) ashore in the open while he was ill. He caused a tree to grow over him.^{lxxxvii}
3. In both the Bible^{lxxxviii} and the *Qur'ān* after his (Prophet Jonah) prayers God responded to Jonah and rescued him from the distress.^{lxxxix}

God Reminded

After a short time, Prophet Jonah recovered and became sound and healthy again. One day as he returned to his place, the gourd plant had dried away. He felt sorry at this change^{xc}. Almighty God reminded him that he did not feel sorry, when he asked the chastisement for the Nenevites, who were more than hundred thousand men. God than directed him to go back to his tribe for his people now believe in God and had stopped worshipping idols.^{xci} When Prophet Jonah

reached his city he prayed to God and his people accepted him again as their Prophet^{xcii}. They enjoyed a great life as long as it was destined for them by Almighty God^{xciii}.

Similarities and Differences:

1. In Bible Jonah prayed to God, "Ah, Lord, was not this I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshīsh; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live,^{xciv} while In *Qur'ān*, when Dhunūn (Prophet Jonah) walked away in anger, he thought that God would never put him to trouble. Then (Jonah) prayed in the depth of darkness, there is no god but God. Pure are God. Indeed he (Jonah) himself was among the wrong doers.^{xcv}

OUTLINE LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

Prophet Jonah was among the Israelites and his nation was among the idolaters. He preached to them the religion of true God, but they refused to accept. He lost all his hopes and invited God's wrath on his nation. The prophet departed from the town and the torment appeared. Prophet Jonah's nation, seeing the torment, started mourning to ask repentance from God. They were forgiven but Prophet Jonah, being gone to another town without asking divine permission, was given the punishment. Resultantly, he was kept in the fish for a certain time.

The story of Prophet Jonah teaches us:

1. To show patience and seek permission from God.
2. That whoever asks repentance from God would be answered by Him, as the nation of Prophet Jonah after asking repentance from God was saved from God's torment, while Jonah being a Prophet was given punishment and was kept in the stomach of fish for some time.
3. About obedience, willingness of courage, gratefulness, sympathy, God's mercy and patience.
4. That no man should take upon himself to judge God's wrath or God's Mercy.
5. That God forgives sins on true repentance, whether they are in a righteous man or among the wicked people.
6. That God plan will always prevail and can never be defeated, as the fish kept Prophet Jonah in his stomach for specific time without eating him.
7. That prayer can change God's intention as if Jonah had not proclaimed God's Purity; he would stay in fish's belly till the day when the dead will be raised.

ⁱ. ('Alūsh, 2003), pp 153.

ⁱⁱ. (Yahyā, 2003)pp 108. The Qur'ān 37: 139

ⁱⁱⁱ. (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946)pp 226.

^{iv}. (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003)pp 310.

^v. ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol. 1, pp 608.

^{vi}. (Muhājir, 1999)pp 119.

^{vii}. (Muhājir, 1999)pp 120.

^{viii}. The Bible Jonah 4: 2

^{ix}. The Qur'ān 37: 139. (Yahyā, 2003)pp 108.

-
- ^x. Nineveh is the capital of Assyria
- ^{xi}. The Bible Jonah 4: 2
- ^{xii}. The Bible Jonah 1: 2.
- ^{xiii}. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol.1, pp 608.
- ^{xiv}. (Al-Nīsābūrī Ā. I., 1954) pp 407.
- ^{xv}. (Al-Nīsābūrī Ā. I., 1954) pp 227.
- ^{xvi}. The Bible, Jonah 1: 2-3.
- ^{xvii}. The Quran 37: 143- 144.
- ^{xviii}. The Bible, Jonah 4: 2
- ^{xix}. (Al-Nīsābūrī Ā. I., 1954) pp 408.
- ^{xx}. The first name was, Rubīl an erudite, a wise man was the first believer. The second believer was Tanūkhah
- ^{xxi}. The Bible, Jonah 3: 6-8.
- ^{xxii}. The Qur'ān, Yunus 10: 98.
- ^{xxiii}. (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003) pp 310.
- ^{xxiv}. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol 1, pp 608.
- ^{xxv}. (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946) pp 227.
- ^{xxvi}. (Muhājir, 1999) 121.
- ^{xxvii}. The Bible, Jonah 3: 10.
- ^{xxviii}. The Qur'ān 10: 98.
- ^{xxix}. The Bible, 4: 3-4.
- ^{xxx}. The Qur'ān, 21: 87.
- ^{xxxi}. The Bible, 4: 1-2.
- ^{xxxii}. (Al-Bukhārī, 1966) Book 60, Hadith 328.
- ^{xxxiii}. The Bible, Jonah 3: 1-3.
- ^{xxxiv}. The Qur'ān 37: 140
- ^{xxxv}. (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946) pp 228.
- ^{xxxvi}. (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003) pp 311.
- ^{xxxvii}. (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946) pp 228.
- ^{xxxviii}. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol. 1, pp 608.
- ^{xxxix}. ('Alūsh, 2003) pp 154.
- ^{xl}. (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003) pp 311.
- ^{xli}. (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946) pp 228.
- ^{xlii}. The Bible, Jonah 2 : 1-10
- ^{xliii}. The Bible, Jonah 3: 1-3.
- ^{xliv}. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol.1, pp 608.
- ^{xlv}. (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946) pp 228.
- ^{xlii}. The Qur'ān 10: 98. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol. 1, pp 609.
- ^{xliii}. The Bible, Jonah 4: 11.
- ^{xlviii}. The Qur'ān 37: 147. (Yahyā, 2003) pp 114. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol. 1, pp 609.
- ^{xlix}. The Bible, Jonah 4, :11
- ^l. (Al-Nīsābūrī Ā. I: 1954) pp 409.
- ^{li}. The Qur'ān 37: 140, ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol.1, pp 608.
- ^{lii}. ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol.1, pp 608.
- ^{liii}. (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003) pp 311.

-
- liv . (Muhājir, 1999)pp 121.
- lv . ('Alūsh, 2003), pp 155.
- lvi . The Qur'ān 37: 141.
- lvii . (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946)pp 229.
- lviii . ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol.1, pp 608.
- lix . The Bible Jonah 1, :4-6
- lx . The Qur'ān 37: 140, (Al-Khālīl, 2003)pp 131.
- lxi . The Qur'ān 37: 141.
- lxii . The Bible, Jonah 1: 7.
- lxiii . Exp.The Qur'ān 37: 141, ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol 2.
- lxiv . The Bible Jonah 1: 7.
- lxv . The Bible, Jonah 1: 8-15
- lxvi . The Qur'ān 37: 142.
- lxvii . (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003)pp 312.
- lxviii . (Muhājir, 1999)pp 122.
- lxix . ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol.1, pp 608.
- lxx . (Al-Nīsābūrī Ā. I., 1954)pp 409
- lxxi . (Al-Nīsābūrī Ā. I., 1954)pp 410.
- lxxii . ('Alūsh, 2003)pp 156.
- lxxiii . (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946)pp 330.
- lxxiv . The Bible, Jonah 1 : 17
- lxxv . Exp. The Qur'ān 37: 140- 148, (Al-Khālīl, 2003) pp131. ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol 2,
- lxxvi . The Qur'ān, 37: 43- 144.(Yahyā, 2003)pp 108, ('Usmānī, 2006), Vol. 2.
- lxxvii . ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol.1, pp 608.
- lxxviii . The Qur'ān 37: 142.
- lxxix . ('Alūsh, 2003)pp 156.
- lxxx . The Qur'ān 37: 146.
- lxxxi . (Muhammad Ābū Al-Fadāl-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946)pp 230.
- lxxxii . (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003)pp 314.
- lxxxiii . The Bible, Jonah 2 : 1-10
- lxxxiv . The Qur'ān 37: 144.
- lxxxv . Exp. The Qur'ān 68: 49. ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol 2.
- lxxxvi . Exp.The Qur'ān 37:145 ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol 2.
- lxxxvii . Exp.The Qur'ān 37: 143- 144, (Al-Khālīl, 2003)pp 131 ('Usmānī, 2006) Vol. 2.
- lxxxviii . The Bible, Jonah 4 : 2-3
- lxxxix . The Qur'ān 21: 88. ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol.1.
- xc . (Muhājir, 1999)pp 122.
- xci . (Kathir, Stories Of The Prophets, 2003)pp 314
- xcii . ('Alūsh, 2003) pp 156.
- xciii . (Muhammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, 1946)pp 230.
- xciv . The Bible, Jonah 4 : 2-3
- xcv . The Qur'ān 21: 87, (Al-Khālīl, 2003)pp 130, ('Usmānī, 2006)Vol 1.

REFERENCES

1. *The Qur'ān*. (1980). (Y. 'Alī, Trans.) Beirūt: Dārul Furqān.
2. 'Alūsh, D. ' . (2003). *Qaṣaṣ Al- Qur'ān*. Baīrūt: Dārul Fikar.
3. 'Asqalaāni, Ḥ. b. (2000). *Fathilbārī Fil Sharahal Ṣahīḥ Al Bukhārī*. Houstan, USA: Darul Salām.
4. 'Usmānī, J. M. (2006). *The Noble Qur'ān* (1st ed.). Karachi: Maktabah Mu'āriful Qur'ān.
5. AlBāqī, ' . (1945). *Al- Mu'jam Al- Mufahras Li Ālfāz Al-Qur'ān Al- Karīm*. Cairo: Dārul Kutab Al- Miṣriyyah.
6. Al-Bukhārī, Ā. ' . (1966). *Ṣahīḥ Al-Bukhārī*. California: al-Jumhūrīyah al-'Arabīyah al-Muttaḥidah.
7. A. I-Khālīl, D. S. (2003). *Atlas of the Qur'ān* (1st ed.). Lahore: Maktabah Dār Us Salām.
8. Al-Nīsābūrī, Ā. I. (1954). *Qaṣaṣ Al- Āmbīyā Al-Musamī 'Arāis Al- Majālis* (4th ed.). Egypt: Maktabah Muṣṭafā Ālbābī.
9. Al-Nīsābūrī, M. b.-Q. (1955). *Sahīḥ Al-Muslim*. Cairo: Dārul Kutab Al- Miṣriyyah.
10. Bahjah, A. (1987). *Anmīyya Āllah* (5th ed.). Cairo: Dārul Sharūq.
11. Esposito, J. L. (2006). *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (3rd ed.). Karachi: Oxford University Press.
12. *The Holy Bible*. (K. James, Trans.)
13. Jean, D. (1956). *Holy Pagans Of The Old Testament*. MaryLand: Helicon Press.
14. Kathir, I. '.-F. (2003). *Stories Of The Prophets* (2nd ed.). (R. Ā. 'Azamī, Trans.) Lahore: Darussalām.
15. Kathir, I. '.-F. (2006). *The Story Of Creation* (1st ed.). Karachi: Darul- Īshaā't.
16. Khamīs, S. (2000). *Al-Qaṣaṣ Al- Dīnī Baīnal- Turās Wal- Tārīkh* (1st ed.). Cairo: Mīrāt Lil Nashar Wal- Ma'lūmāt.
17. Khatīb, ' . K. (1984). *Al-Qaṣaṣ Al-Qur'āni Fi Mantūqahu Wal- Mafhūmahu* (1st ed.). Bīrūt: Dār ul Fikar Al- 'Arabi.
18. Maulana Muḥammad Ḥifżur Rahmān Siūharwī, 1. E. (2000). *Stories From The Qur'an* (1st ed.). ('. R. Sa'īd, Trans.) Karachi: Dārul Ishā't Ūrdū Bāzār.
19. Muḥājir, ' . M. (1999). *Lessons From The Stories Of The Qur'ān*. Lahore: Sh. Muḥammad Ashraf.
20. Muḥammad Ābū Al-Faḍal-Al-Ibrāhīm, M. Ā. (1946). *Qaṣaṣ Al-Qur'ān* (1st ed.). Cairo: Dārul Kutab Al- Miṣriyyah.
21. Naik, D. Z. (2003). *The Bible: Scientific Comparison between Qur'ān and Bible*. New Delhi: New Delhi Publishers.
22. Shafī', M. M. (2005). *Mu'āriful Qur'ān*. (S. Muḥammad, Trans.) Karachi: Maktabah Dārul 'Ulūm.
23. Shafī', M. M. (2005). *Qaṣaṣ Mu'āriful Qur'ān* (1st ed.). Karachi: Maktabah Dārul 'Ulūm.
24. Siūharwī, M. M. (2000). *Stories From The Qur'an*. (Q. M. Rafīq 'Abdur Rahmān And Sa'īd, Trans.) Karachi: Dārul Ishā't Ūrdū Bāzār.
25. Yahyā, H. (2003). *General Knowledge From the Qur'ān*. New Delhi: Millat Book Centre.