



Narratives of the Jewish Nation in the Qur'an

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Abstract

The history of the Jewish people is a complex topic, encompassing various historical, theological and moral dimensions, and one of which is elaborated in the Qur'ān. Narratives about the Jews in the Qur'ān, scattered across various suras and verses, often highlight their exemplary and avoidable behavior as lessons for mankind. This study aims to analyze in depth about the Jewish nation as mentioned in the Qur'an. The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques through documentation. After the data is collected, the analysis is done by reducing the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusions. The results show that the narrative of the Jewish people in the Qur'an includes praising them as a descendant glorified by God and showing various extraordinary gifts given to the Jewish people. The verses were revealed to provide lessons and warnings to Prophet Muhammad and Muslims to face challenges patiently and believe that the truth will eventually prevail. In addition, the Qur'ān also explains that the Jewish people have made mistakes that have incurred God's wrath, and offers warnings about the consequences of disobedience.

Keywords: Narration, Jewish Nation, Qur'an.

INTRODUCTION

The narrative of the Jews in the Qur'an is a complex and rich topic with various historical, theological, and moral aspects (Nata, 2016). The Qur'an, as the holy book of Muslims, not only serves as a guide to life, but also as the main source for understanding the history of previous peoples, including the story of the Children of Israel or the Jewish people (Haif, 2016). In this case, the Qur'an presents their stories with various purposes, ranging from providing warnings to moral lessons for Muslims.

Overall, the Qur'an provides an overview of the Jewish people as a portrait of the historical journey of a unique religious community (Majid, 2020). Not much different from the Bible's narrative, the Qur'anic story of the Jews shows God's rescue of a people chosen by Him, because of their belief in Him (Romadhan & Khair, 2022). Prophets were sent to them who continuously warned and guided them to moral salvation and towards a life in line with God's guidance.

However, their rude, primitive behavior, which often upset God's messengers and forced them to complain to the Almighty, led to the descent of disasters as punishment for their disobedience (Hidayati, 2019). On the other hand, pious families among them are also mentioned in the Qur'an, although their number seems very small.

The Qur'ān describes the relationship between God and the Jewish people by describing the various favors they have received as well as noting their transgressions and mistakes. These narratives, which are scattered in various suras and verses, often highlight Jewish behavior both worthy of emulation and to be avoided as a lesson for all mankind. Hermeneutically, the stories of the Jews in the Qur'an can be understood as a picture of life that contains deep moral and spiritual messages. The Qur'anic approach in presenting these stories reflects divine justice and wisdom, where every action carries consequences, and every nation has moral responsibilities that must be fulfilled.

The battle between right and wrong, justice and injustice, and between the oppressed and the oppressor, is an eternal conflict that is very visible in the history of mankind. From the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was betrayed by his brothers out of jealousy, to the conflict between Pharaoh and Moses, and the birth of Jesus, these are all examples of the never-ending struggle. These battles serve as a test for mankind to distinguish between those who are faithful to the faith and those who are disobedient. In the end, goodness, honesty, sincerity, moral commitment and justice always prevailed, albeit often through severe challenges. In this study, it is important to explore how the Qur'an describes the Jewish people, understand the relevant verses, and absorb the messages contained to deepen insights into the history of religion and human morality.

Previous research by (Firestone, 2019) on the sacred and counter-history of the Prophet Muhammad, the Jews, and the composition of the Qur'an found that in Islamic teachings, there were some Jews who recognized the authenticity of Muhammad's prophethood and decided to join him. However, most of them were criticized for rejecting the Prophet and not adhering to their religious teachings. Another study by (Amin, 2020) on the Qur'ānic attitude towards the Jews, which was a response to accusations of anti-Semitism, found several important points: (1) The Qur'ānic attitude towards the Jews cannot be regarded as entirely anti-semitic; (2) Verses that may give the impression of cynicism towards the Jews should be seen in the context of the Qur'ān's universal, egalitarian message; (3) Verses that appear anti-semitic were actually revealed in a specific and logical historical context, in response to the behavior of the Jews at that time.

The novelty of this research lies in the approach used to understand the narrative of the Jewish people in Islamic sacred texts. This research is expected to contribute in helping to understand the representation of the history and behavior of the Jewish people in the sacred texts. Through this understanding, humanity can take lessons from the stories to strengthen their faith and piety. In addition, this study has the potential to improve interfaith dialog by developing better understanding and tolerance between Muslims and Jews. The study also offers moral

insights that are useful as guidelines in daily life, both individually and socially. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyze in depth the Jewish nation as mentioned in the Qur'an.

Based on the above background, the purpose of this study is to deeply analyze the narrative of the Jewish people in the Qur'an, both from historical, theological, and moral aspects. This research aims to understand the meaning of verses related to the Jewish people in the context of divine justice, moral responsibility, and universal lessons that are relevant for contemporary life. The benefits of this research include enriching Qur'anic studies, supporting interfaith dialog through better understanding between Muslims and Jews, and providing moral guidelines that can be applied in individual and social life. This research is expected to contribute both academically and practically in building harmony and moral awareness in society.

METHOD

The research was conducted using qualitative methods, with the main focus being to analyze social phenomena in a natural and in-depth manner. According to (Fadli, 2021) Qualitative research aims to understand various social and human events thoroughly, by producing complex and detailed descriptions, which are conveyed through words from various sources against a natural background. In this study, the data used is secondary data obtained through documentation techniques. Documentation technique is a data collection method that involves the use of written sources or pre-existing documents. These documents can be in the form of reports, archives, notes, policies, publications, or other types of written material (Nilamsari, 2014). After the data was collected, the analysis process was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

The first stage is data reduction, where data is filtered to focus on the most relevant information through coding and identification of key themes or patterns. The second stage is data presentation, where the filtered data is organized in a clear format, in the form of a narrative, to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships. The final stage is conclusion drawing, where the data is analyzed to make relevant conclusions, by comparing the findings with existing theories and relating them to the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The story of the Children of Israel begins with Abraham, who left Babylon in search of truth and peace. Unlike the Old Testament, the Qur'an focuses on Abraham as the "father" of both Jews and Muslims and a model of sincere faith in *tawhid* (Q.S. al-Naḥl: 120). Through reflection on the universe (Q.S. al-An'ām: 75-79) and questioning resurrection (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 260), Abraham deepened his faith. After facing hostility and attempts to harm him for challenging his people (Q.S. al-Anbiyā': 52-69), God saved him, leading to his migration. The Qur'an describes this journey reaching the Hijaz, where he and his son Ismail built the Kaaba..

The Qur'an provides a detailed account of the history of the Children of Israel, beginning with Jacob and his sons, particularly through the story of Joseph in Surah Yusuf. Joseph was cast out by his jealous brothers and abandoned in a well, later rescued by a caravan and sold into slavery in Egypt. Despite facing challenges, including false accusations by his employer's wife and years of imprisonment, Joseph's resilience shaped his maturity, wisdom, and spiritual strength. His unique ability to interpret dreams marked the turning point in his life, enabling him to explain the King's puzzling dream. This led to his appointment as a high-ranking official entrusted with managing Egypt's wealth (Q.S. Yusuf 43-49).

The event that Joseph predicted (i.e. a long drought) actually happened. The famine season came and the people of Egypt were ready for it. Residents of surrounding countries, including Canaan, came to Egypt to seek food aid. It was there, as the Qur'an tells the story, that Joseph visited his brothers again in a different atmosphere. Joseph's brothers repented and admitted their mistake of envying Joseph. They, along with their father Jacob, then moved and eventually settled in Egypt. From here began the life of the Children of Israel in Egypt until the time of slavery by Pharaoh which ended with the arrival of Prophet Moses as a savior who guided them to the promised land.

The Qur'anic narrative shows high moral concern. Abraham's family is singled out by God as the chosen people because of their commitment to piety and upright religious teachings. The Qur'an does not mention the formal religion of Ibrahim and his family (his descendants, such as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and others), but the Qur'an repeatedly says that they were *Muslims*, surrendering themselves to God. When Ibrahim was declared by God to be His chosen servant, he once hoped that his descendants would (automatically) also become the chosen ones. Then God emphasized that His promise would not reach the wrongdoers.

And (remember) when Abraham was tested by his Lord with a few words (commands and prohibitions), and Abraham fulfilled them. Allah said: "Indeed, I have made you a priest for all people." Ibrahim said: "(And I ask also) of my descendants." Allah said: "My promise is not to the wrongdoers" (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 124).

The Qur'ān is emphatic in its portrayal of Ibrahim as sincere and merciful, and his selection as *khalīl Allāh* and imam of the righteous is solely due to his pure heart and courteous behavior. The Qur'ān in this case can be understood as emphasizing that there was nothing special about God's treatment of Ibrahim. God does not discriminate against His servants. The high rank that Ibrahim achieved was due to his spiritual victory over all temptations and challenges; Ibrahim was able to pass all of God's tests.

The Qur'anic references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob certainly have something to do with the claims of Jews and Christians as groups who inherited the teachings of the Patriarch. Moreover, the Jews say they are the chosen people only because they are descendants of Abraham. According to the Qur'an, the Jews and Christians say that only by following their religion will people be guided.

And they said: "Become a Jew or a Christian and you will surely be guided." Say: "No, rather (we follow) the straight religion of Abraham. He was not of the polytheists" (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 135).

The Qur'an refutes this claim and reconstructs the story of Abraham and Israel in a more universal and humanist format. As seen in the verse above and various other Qur'anic verses, the disclosure of the story of the Children of Israel, including their ancestral roots, is inseparable from the Qur'an's efforts to win polemics with Jewish and Christian groups in Medina.

The scattered Qur'anic stories reflect their context-specific revelation, often tied to the Prophet's interactions with Jews and Christians. Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an focuses on conveying divine messages rather than historical chronology, offering reflections on universal human behavior beyond specific times and places. Furthermore, according to (Majeed, 2020) some of the Qur'anic stories, such as that of Adam, are mere fiction; that is, they are not facts that actually existed in history. Abraham is mentioned in twenty-two surahs of the Qur'an with different portions. In Surah al-Baqarah (124-140 and 258-260) he is mentioned somewhat more. Here Ibrahim is portrayed as a person who is sincerely devoted to God and is referred to as a *Muslim*. His pious children and grandchildren are also described as following in Ibrahim's footsteps. They are people who have simply surrendered themselves in submission to God.

Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They answered: "We worship your Lord and the Lord of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, (i.e.) One God; we submit ourselves to Him" (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 133).

The Qur'an frequently highlights that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were Muslims, emphasizing their submission to God. It appeals to the Children of Israel to recognize God's immense blessings upon them and to avoid disobedience or hostility toward Muhammad, whose teachings continue the message delivered by their ancestors' prophets. The Qur'an underscores the unity of God's messengers, all of whom conveyed the same core teachings: to worship God alone and fulfill moral responsibilities in preparation for accountability in the hereafter. Therefore, as said (Rahman, 2020), the Qur'an clearly gives the Jews wide autonomy to practice their religion, although it does not stop inviting them to Islam.

Yusuf, whose prophethood is debated among scholars (Siddiqi, 1994: 98), is central to the emergence of the Children of Israel as a distinct religious community, initiating their presence in Egypt. His story in the Qur'an highlights not only his deep spirituality but also the destructive nature of malice rooted in low mentality, contrasting it with the ultimate triumph of honesty and adherence to true religion. While in prison, Yusuf demonstrated his commitment to the Abrahamic faith by first delivering a religious message to his companions before interpreting their dreams, proudly declaring his rejection of false religions and his devotion to the straight path gifted by God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Joseph said: "The food that is to be given to you does not come to you except that I reveal its interpretation before it comes to you. That is some of what my Lord has taught me. Indeed, I have left the religion of those who do not believe in Allah, and they deny the Last Day. And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is not proper for us to associate anything with Allah. Such is the bounty of Allah upon us and upon men; but most men are ungrateful.

O ye two prisoners, which is better, the various gods or Allah, the One, the Mighty? You do not worship anything other than Allah except those names which you and your fathers have made up. Allah has not revealed any information about these names. The decision belongs only to Allah. He has commanded that you should worship none but Him. That is the straight religion, but most people do not know (Q.S. Yūsuf: 37-40).

Yusuf is mentioned in the Qur'an as someone who received wisdom and knowledge from God. This was none other than Joseph's own goodness.

And when he was old enough, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. Thus We reward those who do good (Q.S. Yūsuf: 22).

The Qur'an consistently emphasizes tawhīd (the worship of God) in its discussions about the Children of Israel, underscoring its claim to the uncorrupted Abrahamic heritage. While addressing Jews and Christians, the Qur'an references their own traditions, highlighting the moral and straight religious principles it asserts have been neglected. It acknowledges the noble ancestry of the Children of Israel and the divine origin of their teachings but stresses that lineage alone does not guarantee God's favor; only sincerity, kindness, and unwavering adherence to God's path can lead to true salvation.

The Qur'an does not give a detailed description of the process by which the Children of Israel in Egypt were transformed into slaves and even treated cruelly. In several verses, the Qur'an reminds the Children of Israel to reflect on how Pharaoh and his followers oppressed them, killing their sons and leaving the women alive, and how God had saved them from this misery.

And (remember) when We saved you from (Pharaoh) and his followers; they inflicted on you a most abominable torment: they slaughtered your male children and left alive your female children. And in that is a great trial from your Lord (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 49).

Slavery had not only destroyed the traditions and civilization of the Children of Israel but had also corrupted their mentality. The people of Israel had lost their identity. The descendants of Jacob were strangers in Egypt. Although they were initially given a place of honor in the kingdom, eventually the Egyptians probably realized that the "natives" were more deserving of power and honor than the "foreigners," and that the foreigners did not deserve to displace the natives. This is a model of fear that has always haunted mankind in the history of ethnic sovereignty - any ethnic group in the world, until today. The Bible tells us how terrified the Egyptians were to see the Children of Israel inhabiting more and more of their land:

(7) And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. (8) Now there rose a new king

over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. (9) And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; (10) come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there befalleth us any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land'. (11) Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. (12) But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were adread because of the children of Israel. (13) And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. (14) And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor (Exodus 1:7-14).

The Qur'an only reveals the lessons to be learned from these events. When the Qur'an speaks about the story of the Children of Israel, its main target is the Israelites themselves who were in Medina and its surroundings at that time, although the lessons it contains are universal. Therefore the Qur'an does not feel the need to reiterate the details of the event, which the Israelites already had knowledge of. So the target speaker is assumed to already know the problem. The task of the Qur'an is only to remind and lead its target to a reflective understanding of history.

The God that the Qur'an reveals in this story, as well as in other verses (e.g. Q.S. al-Anfāl: 26 about God's help to the Muslims of Mecca), is a God who always sides with the weak. In the verse below, the Qur'an again shows how God *cares* for the Children of Israel. However, it should be noted that God's concern for the Children of Israel is not merely because they are weak. God loves and gives help to them because they are patient.

And We bequeathed to the oppressed people the lands of the east of the earth and the west of it which We had blessed. And your Lord's good word was completed (as a promise) to the Children of Israel because of their patience. And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people had made and what they had built (Q.S. al-A'rāf: 137).

Likewise, God destroyed Pharaoh and his followers because they were unjust and arrogant, not merely because they were enemies of the Children of Israel.

They denied the verses of their Lord, so We destroyed them for their sins and We drowned Pharaoh and his followers; all of them were wrongdoers (Q.S. al-Anfāl: 54).

The enslavement of the Children of Israel in Egypt is not only seen by the Qur'an as a punishment in the negative sense, but also contains a positive value, namely as a test. At the very least, verse 137 of Surah al-A'rāf as quoted above views positively the attitude of the Children of Israel who patiently faced trials, and therefore God rewarded them by providing assistance and victory for them against their enemies. The story of Moses is known in all three major world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For Jews it is a picture of a great victory, a deliverance from suffering, a great salvation. God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt by His great grace

and guided them to a prosperous land (Leviticus, 26: 9-10). In the Old Testament, the story of Moses runs from *Exodus* to *Deuteronomy*.

For Christians, Moses paves the way for Jesus, often seen as a second Moses who came to save his people. However, Jesus is frequently portrayed as superior, as emphasized in John 1:17 and Hebrews 8:1-6, where Jesus is described as the mediator of a better covenant. The concept of Christ as the Son of God leads to viewing Moses as historically significant but subordinate to Jesus.

On the other hand, Moses' example can be seen in terms of leadership. A Christian writer, (Ishola & Wojuola, 2019) said that Moses sacrificed his life for his people and guided them to salvation. When God handed over this task to him, he felt himself insignificant and very small, and said: "Who is your servant that I should face Pharaoh and bring the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt?" But God replied: "I will be with you!" (*Exodus* 3: 11-12). A great leader or one who wants to succeed, according to the author, must indeed depart from a sense of guilt and smallness, and present God in all his actions.

To summarize, in the Jewish and Christian traditions the story of Moses remains an impetus for the development of a better life for individuals and society. The story of Moses is a story of God's power and His endless guidance to all His servants.

The story of Moses in the Qur'an centers on the opposition between Pharaoh and Moses, symbolizing falsehood versus truth, darkness versus light, and oppressors versus the oppressed. Pharaoh, representing disbelief and tyranny, anchored his rule in worldly power, claiming Egypt for the Egyptians, while Moses, reflecting faith and resistance to injustice, emphasized that the earth belongs to God and is granted by His will. This fundamental clash of reasoning led Moses to challenge Pharaoh's oppressive logic, particularly his justification for enslaving the Children of Israel, making Moses a rebel in Pharaoh's eyes and leading to his expulsion from Egypt.

Pharaoh's arrogance is expressed in the Qur'an at the beginning of Surah al-Qaṣaṣ as a *prelude* to the story of Moses.

We recite to you part of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in truth for those who believe. Verily, Pharaoh hath been arbitrary in the earth, and hath divided the people, and hath oppressed a part of them, and hath slain their sons, and hath left their daughters alive. Verily Pharaoh was of those who do mischief. And We were about to give bounty to the oppressed of the land (Egypt) and to make them rulers and to make them inheritors (of the land), And We will establish their position on the earth, and We will show Pharaoh and Haman and their army what they always feared from them (Al-Qaṣaṣ: 3-6).

Furthermore, in another verse, it is mentioned that Pharaoh's followers also viewed Moses as nothing more than a leader of a chaotic movement and a destroyer of Egyptian traditions or civilization.

The princes of Pharaoh's people said: "Will you let Moses and his people corrupt the earth (Egypt) and forsake you and your gods?" Pharaoh replied: We will kill their sons and let their women live, and indeed we have full power over them" (Al-A'rāf: 127).

The difficulty Moses faced vis-à-vis Pharaoh and his followers was that they regarded him as a rebel and had come to seize power. Therefore they would not believe him (Q.S. Yūnus: 78). Such an attitude came about as a result of their worldly outlook and fanatical attachment to the past and the traditions of their ancestors - an attitude that the Qur'an always condemns. This is a major obstacle to the moral development of a nation.

Like the Prophet Muhammad too, Moses was initially moved by the anxiety of wanting to release his people from injustice. However, the inspirations that formed the basis of his moral movement and teachings were universal. Moses did not merely come to save the Children of Israel from Pharaoh's injustice, but also to save Pharaoh and his people from going astray. Moses came with a strong moral reason why he did so and invited Pharaoh to return to the right path.

*Go you two (Moses and Aaron) to Pharaoh, indeed he has transgressed.
So speak to him both of you with gentle words, so that he may remember or fear (Tāhā: 43-44).*

The Qur'an does not reject the possibility of Pharaoh accepting Moses' call. But in reality he was arrogant, returning gentle invitations with hatred and countering all arguments with force, lies and insults.

Regarding the life of Moses and his followers in Egypt during those stressful times, the Qur'an tells us:

Moses said: "O my people, if you believe in Allah, then put your trust in Him alone, if you are truly those who surrender."

*So they replied: "It is to Allah that we put our trust. O our Lord, do not make us an object of calumny for the wrongdoers,
and save us by Your mercy from those who disbelieve."*

We revealed to Moses and his brother: "Take for yourselves some houses in Egypt as dwellings for your people, and make your houses the Qiblah, and establish prayer and encourage the believers."

Moses said: "O our Lord, indeed You have given Pharaoh and the leaders of his people adornment and wealth in the life of the world; O our Lord, as a result they misled (people) from Your way. O our Lord, destroy their possessions, and lock their hearts, and they will not believe until they see a painful torment."

Allah says: "Verily, your supplication has been granted, so keep you both on the straight path and follow not the way of those who know not" (Q.S. Yūnus: 84-89).

These verses show how tense their lives were under Pharaoh's political oppression, and Moses made it clear that resistance was necessary. Moses reminds his people to put their trust and surrender to God. Moses was convinced that Pharaoh could no longer be persuaded to follow the truth; Pharaoh had done much damage and Moses pleaded with God to destroy Pharaoh and

his arrogant civilization and people. God accepted Moses' prayer and he and the Children of Israel were saved.

We made it possible for the Children of Israel to cross the sea; then they were followed by Pharaoh and his army, in an attitude full of malice and hostility; so that when they were about to drown, Pharaoh said: "I believe that there is no God but the God in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who surrender (to God)" (Q.S. Yūnus: 90).

God, in the verse above, rejects Pharaoh's repentance because it is certainly not a sincere repentance; after all, he is a destroyer of people (Q.S. Yūnus: 91). This verse shows how a civilization that was built has now come to naught, because it was established without reference to spirituality and morals and with disregard for human values.

God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation and dwell in Canaan set the stage for the Exodus. The Children of Israel, oppressed in Egypt, sought to fulfill this promise through their escape from slavery and return to Canaan. This miraculous event, central to Judaism, marked God's direct intervention in history, saving a nation, revealing laws and morals, and solidifying the Sinai experience as a cornerstone of the Hebrew Bible (Chidester, 2018).

The story of the Exodus in the Bible refers to Abraham's covenant with God, as mentioned above. This shows that therein lies the spirit and revolutionary power of Moses' vocation to call and save his people. The latter part of the book of Genesis tells of a superior nation, descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were not in Canaan, but in Egypt. Yet Canaan remained the land of their final destination, the promised land.

And Joseph said unto his brethren: 'I die; but God will surely remember you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob' (Genesis 50:24).

Therefore, the slavery of the Children of Israel in Egypt, the presence of Moses as the Savior, Moses' escape to Median and his meeting with God on a journey home, have their own meaning, as part of the process that God has arranged to guide His chosen servants to a fertile and blessed land, namely Canaan. That is why all the *events* and characters in the Exodus are considered to be the *heart and soul of the Jewish Religion* (Chidester, 2018).

Having escaped slavery in Egypt and having reached the land beyond the sea, the Children of Israel are presented by the Qur'an with a different focus. They are now revealed as an undisciplined, rebellious and ungrateful group of people.

And (remember) when Moses said to his people: "O my people, remember the favor of Allah upon you when He appointed prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you what He had not given to any other people."

O my people, enter into the holy land (Palestine) which Allah has ordained for you, and do not flee backward (for fear of the enemy), so that you become losers.

They said: "O Moses, verily there are mighty men in that land; verily we shall not enter it until they come out of it. If they come out of it, we will certainly enter it."

Two of those who feared Allah because of the favor He had bestowed upon them said: "Invade them through the gate of the city; then when you enter it you will surely win. And to Allah alone should you put your trust, if you are truly believers."

They said: "O Moses, we shall not enter it forever, while they are in it; therefore go you with your Lord, and fight both of you; surely we are only sitting here waiting."

Moses said: "O my Lord, I am not master except of myself and my brother, so separate between us and the wicked."

Allah says: "(If so), then indeed the land is forbidden to them for forty years; (during which) they will circle around in confusion on the earth. So do not grieve for the wicked" (Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 20-26).

The above verses are the points of the story of a people's defiance of their leader. However, the concise Qur'anic record shows the dynamics of life and mentality of a nation that has just started their new life after being colonized and enslaved by an oppressive ruler for a long time.

Therefore, on the other hand, the verses of the Qur'an strongly criticize the Children of Israel. They are mentioned as ignorant and unfaithful to the teachings of God Almighty. They were easily influenced by the behavior of other people they witnessed, even though it deviated from their covenant commitment with God.

We sent the Children of Israel across the sea, and they came to a people who worshipped their idols. The Children of Israel said: "O Moses, make for us a god (idol) as they have gods." Moses replied: "Surely you are an ignorant people" (Q.S. al-A'rāf: 138).

They are now an ungrateful people. The Qur'ān shows how a people who had been saved from many calamities and given many bounties but they still showed an unbecoming attitude towards God. Moses was reminded not to grieve too much at their attitude. God would repay them with real punishment.

This story provides Prophet Muhammad with a comparison for his prophetic mission, highlighting that prophets often face resistance and ungratefulness from their people. It reassures the Prophet, emphasizing that previous prophets encountered similar challenges and that God remains steadfast in supporting His messengers. The Qur'an was revealed not to burden the Prophet but to serve as a warning for those who fear God, affirming divine guidance and justice..

We have not sent down this Qur'an to you that you may be troubled, but as a warning to those who fear (Allah) (Q.S. Tṣāhā: 2-3).

If this is examined with a keen historical *sense*, it will undoubtedly be seen that the Qur'an is talking about human nature in history. The Qur'an warns the Prophet Muhammad and his people to be careful and not to repeat the same mistakes that the Children of Israel have made. This does not mean that the Qur'an discredits the Children of Israel.

Moses had done his job, freeing the Children of Israel from the cruelty of King Pharaoh and leading them to their ancestral dream of occupying the land of Canaan that God had promised. They had been rescued to a plain leading to that hopeful realm. Now they were in Sinai, a desert

that offered a difficult life. However, God still gave them ease and abundant food. Water came out of the rock and food fell from the sky - an "imaginative" picture of extraordinary bounty.

We covered you with clouds and sent down upon you manna and salwā. Eat of the good things We have given you. They did not wrong Us; they only wronged themselves (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 57; Q.S. al-A'rāf: 160; Tṣāhā: 80).

In another verse, regarding a spring of water gushing from a rock, it says:

And (remember) when Moses asked for water for his people, and We said: "Strike the rock with your staff." So twelve springs gushed forth from it. Indeed, each tribe knew its own drinking place. Eat and drink of the sustenance (given) by Allah, and do not roam the earth in corruption (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 60).

These verses explain the many gifts and favors that God has bestowed upon the Children of Israel. The Qur'an calls on the Jews to pay attention and reflect on this; not only that, it also shows them how their "stubbornness" and ungratefulness for God's favors have caused them to be punished by God and sentenced to severe punishment or torture. According to the Qur'an, since the time of Prophet Moses they had been warned not to do damage to the earth and to submit to their leader, the prophet sent by God, but in reality, they still did not take lessons from the past and ignored their promises with God.

Another story that the Qur'an reveals about the phenomenon of Moses' people in Sinai is the story of Karun (Qārūn).

Indeed, Karun was among the people of Moses, so he wronged them. We have bestowed upon him treasures whose keys are heavy for a number of strong men to carry. (Remember) when his people said to him: "Do not be too proud; surely Allah does not like those who boast too much" (Q.S. al-Qaṣaṣ: 76).

The story of Karun is part of the story of Moses, but it is mentioned somewhat separately. Surah al-Qaṣaṣ begins with the story of Moses, which is revealed at length, up to forty verses. The Qur'an then draws a number of lessons from this story that are packaged as arguments in response to the attitude of the Arab pagans and against their reasons for rejecting the message conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad. The verses in this surah then continue in the form of an attempt to reassure the Prophet that his message was rejected only because of their malice and spiritual ignorance, not because of the lack of reliability of the message itself.

They said: "If we had followed your guidance, we would have been expelled from our land." And did We not establish their position in a secure haram (holy land), from which fruits of all kinds (of vegetation) are brought to you as sustenance from Us? But most of them do not know (Q.S. al-Qaṣaṣ: 57).

This verse reflects the disbelievers of Mecca's disregard for truth, valuing social status and fleeting worldly wealth instead. To illustrate, the Qur'an recounts the story of Karun, a wealthy man whose arrogance and disbelief led him to reject divine guidance, believing his success stemmed solely from his knowledge. While some admired his wealth, those endowed with true

understanding recognized that Allah's reward is far superior, attainable only by those who believe, act righteously, and remain patient (Q.S. al-Qaṣaṣ: 80).

In the Bible (Number 16), Karun (Korah) is said to have rebelled against Moses and Aaron. The storyline of the origin of the rebellion is not very clear. Apparently, Karun wanted to become a "Priest" for his people and gain a position of leadership. Perhaps he was jealous of Moses' success or because God had chosen him to be the leader of the Children of Israel. But then, the story of God's punishment of Karun and his followers is expressed clearly and graphically.

(32) And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. (33) So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit; and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly. (34) And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said: 'Lest the earth swallow us up'. (35) And fire came forth from the LORD, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men who offered the incense (Numbers 16: 32-35).

The Qur'anic version seems different. The moral side of the Qur'an is related to the atmosphere of Mecca city life with its arrogant rulers who are very afraid of losing their property. The compatibility of the versions of the two scriptures may not be too important for a moral lesson. For the Qur'an, it is a true story, and the truth of course lies in the content of the divine message it contains - not necessarily the factual truth that can be verified historically.

Meanwhile, where is life in Canaan. Canaan was the promised land. God had told Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the land belonged to them and their descendants, the Children of Israel. In historical literature and in the Bible the land is referred to variously, but all center on the area known today as Palestine (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v). In the final verses of *Deuteronomy* it says:

(1) And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is over against Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, even Gilead as far as Dan, (2) and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the hinder sea, (3) and the South, and the Plain, even the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, as far as Zoar. (4) And the LORD said unto him: 'This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying: I will give it unto thy seed; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thence' (Deuteronomy 34:1-4).

According to the Bible, Joshua (Joshua; Yūsyā' in Islamic tradition) then continued Moses' struggle until they could occupy the land. The long story, as in the Bible, of the conquest process does not concern the Qur'an. The first important event that the Qur'an mentions about the life of the Children of Israel in Canaan is the story of Ṭālūt's struggle against Jālūt. The Qur'an expresses this in relation to the attitude of Muslims in the face of war.

The story surrounding the life of Ṭālūt in the Bible is only a small part of the epochal episode of great change for the Children of Israel. They were in the midst of a tumultuous period. The power of the Philistines posed a daunting threat to the Children of Israel. There had been about a century of conflict between these two nations and the Children of Israel had almost lost their

confidence. The most prominent figure of this era was actually Samuel, a Priest who was later called by God to be a Prophet. It was this prophetic call that paved the way for their victory. Samuel at that time was old and unable to provide maximum service for the cause of his people. So the community leaders asked him to appoint a king to lead the Children of Israel against their enemies. It is this snippet of the story that the Qur'an records.

Did you not notice the leaders of the Children of Israel after Moses, when they said to one of their Prophets: "Raise for us a king that we may fight (under his leadership) in the way of Allah." Their Prophet replied: "It is possible that if you are later obliged to fight, you will not fight." They replied: "Why should we not fight in the cause of Allah, when we have been driven from our homes and from our children?" So when war was made obligatory upon them, they turned away, except for a few of them. And Allah knows best those who do wrong (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 246).

This verse illustrates the initial enthusiasm of the Children of Israel, who seemed eager and impatient for the call to battle, described by Qutşb as *mutahşassün nazşriyya li al-jihād*. However, their Prophet first tested this enthusiasm to ensure their commitment once a king was appointed. Through stages of disciplinary trials led by Ṭālūt, a core group with steadfast faith emerged, demonstrating that true loyalty is revealed through rigorous testing.

The Qur'an continues, when Ṭālūt was appointed king, they protested. The objection was none other than the fact that Ṭālūt was not a man of wealth. Here again we see how the Qur'an reveals the most important moral message of the story. A king or leader is not measured by the wealth he possesses, but his knowledge and physical health should be considered.

Their prophet told them: "Verily Allah has made Ṭālūt your king." They replied: "How can Ṭālūt rule over us when we have more right to control the government than him, and he has not been given much wealth?" (Their Prophet) said: "Verily, Allah has chosen him to be your king and endowed him with vast knowledge and a mighty body." Allah gives rule to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Knowing (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 247).

Meanwhile, the sign that Ṭālūt became king was the return of the ark of God (1 Samuel 5-6) to them (the Children of Israel), in which "there is rest from your Lord and a remnant from the family of Moses and the family of Aaron; the ark was carried by an Angel. Surely in such is a sign for you, if you are believers" (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 248). According to (Silverstein et al., 2015) it turns out to be true, in line with the biblical narrative, that the ark was returned by the Palestinians who took it away, before Ṭālūt became king.

Now Ṭālūt and his soldiers went out to the battlefield. The test of discipline is applied. So when Ṭālūt came out with his army, he said: "Verily, Allah will test you with a river. So whoever among you drinks of its water is not my follower; whoever does not drink of it, except for a handful, is my follower." Then they drank it except for a few of them. When Ṭālūt and those who believed with him crossed the river, those who had drunk said: "We are not able this day to fight Jālūt and his army." Those who believed that they would meet Allah said:

"How many of the few can overcome the many with the permission of Allah. And Allah is with those who are patient" (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 249).

The core group then faced off against Jālūt, their enemy. So this is what happened:

When they were seen by Jālūt and his army, they (Ṭālūt and his army) prayed: "O our Lord, pour patience upon us, and make our stand firm and help us against the disbelievers." So they defeated the army of Jālūt with the permission of Allah and (in the battle) David (Dāwūd) killed Jālūt, then Allah gave him (David) rule and wisdom, (after the death of Ṭālūt) and taught him what He willed. Had Allah not repelled (the evil) of some men with that of others, the earth would have been ruined. But Allah has bounty (bestowed) upon the universe (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 250-251).

The story in the Qur'an is brief compared to the Bible's detailed narrative of David, a young boy with simple war equipment, defeating the heavily armed Jālūt (Goliath). A key similarity lies in the emphasis that a small, faithful group fighting for God can overcome a larger, materially superior army driven by idolatry. This verse highlights that spiritual strength can triumph over material arrogance and serves as a theological foundation for justifiable war, waged righteously in God's path against aggression. The Qur'an respects past communities loyal to God's message, emphasizing spirituality, truth, and submission over worldliness, falsehood, and arrogance.

In Jewish tradition, Canaan is God's promised land. Yet - "for some reason" - the Jewish people had to enter and occupy it by way of bloodshed. The territory, as Max I. (Diamond, 2018), had become a corridor of warlike imperial soldiers. The Israelites were constantly engaged in combat. They were captured, enslaved and deported to foreign lands. Yet, they - even today - continue to return to Canaan, no matter the cost. They had, Dimont says, made a very wrong decision. But that was God's decision; or, had God made a misguided decision?

Upon entering Canaan, the Children of Israel, under the valiant leadership of Joshua, had soundly defeated their enemies. The Bible's description of the conquest may even seem sinister, savage and downright barbaric.

(8) And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, and they smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining. (9) And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him; he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire. (10) And Joshua turned back at that time, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor was the head of all those kingdoms. (11) And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was none left that breathed; and he burnt Hazor with fire. (12) And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and he smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed them; as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded (Joshua 11:8-12).

People unfamiliar with the story of ancient life will find it strange how God could have commanded His chosen people to commit such incredible atrocities. However, it was not as cruel as the destruction of civilization that the Greeks inflicted on Crete, or the Romans inflicted on the

Etruscans around seven centuries BC. Moreover, the Canaanite civilization had to be destroyed because God Almighty willed it. The religion on which their civilization was based had been perverted to worship gods other than the One God; human sacrifices were offered to the god Moloch, lewd rites and orgies were kept alive and even "holy prostitution" was practiced in the name of a female deity called *Asherah* or *Baalā*. All these deeds had incurred God's wrath, and He sent the Children of Israel to destroy them (Sand, 2020).

The Qur'ān certainly does not want to speculate with all these stories and it is not the Qur'ān's purpose to record historical events as the Bible does. As a book of *hidāyah*, the Qur'ān considers it sufficient to take a certain snippet from a story, which has a deep moral and educational content. Historical facts are a part of science that humans can explore on their own; the Qur'an gives wide latitude in this regard.

Ṭālūt's downfall was marked by deep depression after God's rejection and his plea for forgiveness did not alter the Prophet's decision. Samuel, instead of returning to the previous tribal system, sought a better king and, at God's command, anointed David. Under David and his son Sulaymān, the Children of Israel experienced a united and prosperous "golden age," epitomized in the verses of David's *Zabūr* (Psalms). The Qur'ān describes it as follows:

So We gave Solomon understanding of the (more appropriate) law; and to each of them We have given wisdom and knowledge. And We have subjected the mountains and the birds; all of them glorified with David. And it was We who did it.

Indeed, We gave David a bounty from Us. (We said): "O mountains and birds, praise repeatedly with David," and We softened iron for him (Q.S. al-Anbiyā': 79; Saba': 10).

In Islamic tradition David is known as a prophet with an extraordinary *sense of art*. The beauty of his verses of praise in the book of *Zabūr* could stun the universe when he recited it. Birds would stop flying and mountains would tremble if they heard David's voice reciting *Zabūr* (Ibn Katsīr). The beauty of reciting scripture, then, becomes an art in itself in Islam, as it is in the Jewish tradition. *Tilāwah al-Qur'ān* and *cantillation of the Torah* have a special place in the traditions of both Jews and Muslims. In the Talmud (*Megillah* 32a) there is an indication that reciting scripture without melody or rhythm is *lifeless* (Jacobson, 2020).

The above verses, if understood allegorically, hint at the overall peace in David's kingdom. Harmony not only prevailed in human society, but the universe was stunned to gaze at the majesty that radiated in the justice, wisdom and sincerity of the King. His command was none other than the command of the Almighty, for he himself had been named as His representative on earth (Q.S. Ṣād: 26). Hence, the mountains and birds were subject to him.

The Qur'an presents David's story concisely, highlighting him as a prophet who received revelation, the *Zabūr*, and embodied steadfastness, piety, obedience, and gratitude (Q.S. al-Nisā': 163; al-An'ām: 84; al-Naml: 15; Ṣād: 17). These verses aimed to reassure Prophet Muhammad of the truth of his message, reminding him of his prophetic qualities and the trials and gratitude exemplified by previous prophets.

The story that the Qur'an tells at some length is about David's repentance because of a mistake he made. God rebuked him through a case brought to him by two disputants.

Has news reached you of the litigants, when they climbed over the fence?

When they entered David, he was surprised at their coming. They said: "Do not be afraid; we are two litigants, one of us wronging the other. So judge between us with justice, and do not deviate from the truth, and guide us to the straight path.

Verily, my brother has ninety-nine she-goats and I have only one. So he said: "Give your goat to me and he beat me in debate."

David said: "Indeed, he has wronged you by asking for your sheep to add to his. And indeed most of those who join together, some of them do wrong to others, except those who believe and do righteous deeds; and these are very few." David knew that We were testing him, so he sought forgiveness from his Lord and fell prostrate and repented.

So We forgave him his fault. And indeed he has a close position with Us and a good return (Q.S. Şād: 21-25).

This is the human side of David that the Qur'an makes clear: a great and wise King, but not without weaknesses; a pious servant, always obedient and vigilant, yet fallible. What kept David close to God was his attitude that immediately realized the mistake, then repented and returned to Him.

The Qur'an does not detail David's mistakes or delve into the tragic end of ʾĪlūt's life, as it focuses on moral lessons rather than unpleasant details. This omission might reflect the Qur'an's respect for figures of dignity and its intention to emphasize universal values over historical specifics. Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an addresses different times and audiences, highlighting distinct aspects tailored to its context and purpose.

The story of Solomon son of David is even more astonishing. The Qur'ān describes both as just and wise kings and judges. But Solomon had a sharper judicial intuition.

And (remember the story of) David and Solomon, when they gave judgment concerning the crops, because they had been destroyed by the goats of their people. And We witnessed the judgment which they gave;

So We have given Solomon understanding of the (more appropriate) law; to each of them We have given wisdom and knowledge. We have also subjected the mountains and the birds; they all glorified with David. It was We who did it (Q.S. al-Anbiyā': 78-79).

When the case was presented, David ruled that the goats be given to the crop owner as compensation. However, eleven-year-old Solomon proposed a fairer solution: the garden owner would temporarily receive the goats, while the goat owner restored the garden, after which both would reclaim their property. David accepted Solomon's suggestion, fulfilling the verse: *fa fahhamnāhā sulaymān*.

The story of Sulaiman and the Queen of Saba' unfolds in detail (Q.S. al-Naml: 20-44). It begins with the hud-hud bird informing Sulaiman of a distant kingdom, prompting him to send a message ordering the queen and her people to submit to him. The Queen of Saba', valuing peace,

sought to appease Sulaiman with gifts, but he rejected them and threatened war. To demonstrate his power, Sulaiman asked who could bring the queen's palace to him, and a knowledgeable figure accomplished it in the blink of an eye, astonishing everyone as the palace appeared before him. Then:

When she came, he asked her: "Is this your throne?" She replied: "As if it were my throne, we have been given foreknowledge and we are the people of submission."

The Qur'anic narrative of Solomon and the Queen of Saba' differs from the Bible's detailed account, where she tested Solomon's wisdom with questions and praised his greatness after he answered them. In the Qur'an, the story highlights moral and divine themes, presenting the queen's submission to God as a pivotal moment. Unlike the resistance and destruction faced by others in the surrounding stories—Moses and Pharaoh, Saleh and the Tsamūd, Lūt and Sodom—the Queen of Saba' was saved because she chose to believe and submit to God's call.

Solomon achieved an extraordinary and unique glory. The pinnacle of his glory is illustrated by the magnificent buildings and palaces, the handiwork of the jinn who bowed under his rule.

The jinns made for Solomon what he desired: lofty buildings, statues and plates (large) like pools and fixed pots (on stoves). Work, O house of David, to give thanks (to Allah). And very few of My servants are thankful (Q.S. Saba': 13).

As a king with bountiful gifts, Solomon's life was not without temptation. Like his father, Solomon was also caught up in a test, namely "when horses were shown to him that were quiet when they stopped and fast when they ran in the evening." Solomon loved them so much that he neglected to "remember God." When he realized his mistake, Sulaiman asked for the horse to be brought back to him and he cut off its legs and neck (Q.S. Şād: 30-34). Power and wealth are not free from temptation. Even a wise king or a devout prophet may sometimes succumb to them. But God always provides a way out. This seems to be what the Qur'an wants to remind us in the story.

And indeed We tested Sulaiman and We made him lie on his chair as a body (weakened by sickness), then he repented.

The end of Solomon's kingdom marked the end of peace in the dynasty of the Children of Israel. Division after division occurred until a great calamity befell them. Israel, which had split into northern Israel and southern Judah, had now become very weak and easily destroyed by enemies. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian ruler, defeated Jerusalem in 597 BC and then totally destroyed it in 586 BC. The inhabitants were killed and the city was destroyed. All the captives were transported as slaves to Babylon (2Kings 23:31 - 25:30). This destruction is probably what the Qur'an mentions as punishment for the Children of Israel for their arrogance and disregard for God's command.

And We have decreed against the Children of Israel in the Book: "Surely you will make mischief on the earth twice and surely you will boast with great arrogance."

So when the time comes for the punishment of the first of these two (crimes), We will bring to you Our servants of great strength, and they will rampage through the villages, and that is a decree that is sure to be carried out (Q.S. al-Isrā': 4-5).

This was the first destruction, which Nebuchadnezzar carried out destroying the entire land of the Children of Israel. But in 358 B.C., Cyrus II of Persia defeated the Babylonians and allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem, build their land and rebuild the Temple that had been destroyed. Jerusalem regained its glory until the Roman occupation, when the Temple was destroyed a second time in 70 AD (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2004). The Qur'an says (continued above):

Then We gave you a turn to defeat them again and We helped you with wealth and children and We made you a larger group.

If you do good, you will do good for yourselves, and if you do evil, evil will be for yourselves; and when the time of punishment for the second (evil) comes, (We will bring others) to disfigure your faces, and they will enter the mosque (Temple) as your enemies entered it the first time, and to destroy whatever they possess (Q.S. al-Isrā': 6-7).

Canaan is an ancient land that the Jewish people occupied for centuries, and to this day they remain reluctant to leave. There they lived in war and peace, defeated enemies and were defeated, expelled and returned. The Qur'an describes the lives of the Children of Israel in the land as dynamic and instructive for those who believe in them.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of this study shows that the stories of the Jews in the Qur'ān highlight their noble lineage and God's great bounty upon them, often presented with praise and moral lessons. Notably, verses emphasizing the positive aspects of their story were generally revealed during the Makkīyah period (e.g., in Surahs al-An'ām, Yūsuf, al-Isrā', al-Anbiyā', al-Naml, and Saba') and at the beginning of the migration to Medina (e.g., the beginning of Surah al-Baqarah). These verses reflect the universal and moral focus of the Qur'ānic call during this period, providing lessons of resilience and faith for the Prophet and Muslims. At the same time, the Qur'ān balances this praise with a critique of the Jews' guilt and the consequences of disobedience, which serves as a broader warning to humanity. This study contributes to the understanding of the Qur'ānic narrative strategy, which features a dual approach of praise and warning to emphasize moral and theological lessons for its readers.

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