

Prophets of Peace: A Comparative Study of Abrahamic Religions

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Abstract— The concept of religion is quite ancient. Religion is directly related with faith. At present Christianity, Judaism and Islam are the most prevalent Abrahamic religions around the world.

These religions were born at the time of great confusion and social injustice. Each of the three religions was preached by the charismatic personality called as the prophet in that particular religion.

This paper is an extensive study of three Abrahamic religions viz. Christianity, Judaism and Islam depicting the actual purpose of each religion and commonality among their respective prophets' message. It is to bring in light that each of the three mentioned religion is actually separate branch of the same tree.

The true purpose of all three prophets is to bring peace in chaotic society of their time and not to spread hatred among people of different religions.

In this paper we will discuss in detail about the emergence of prophets and similarity among the characteristics and messages of the prophets of all three selected religions.

Keywords— Abrahamic Religion, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Comparative study etc

I. INTRODUCTION

PROPHET is a person who speaks for God or a deity, or by divine inspiration. Prophets are also called "seers," because of their spiritual insight or their ability to "see" the future.

In religion, a prophet is an individual who has claimed to have been contacted by the supernatural or the divine, and to speak for them, serving as an intermediary with humanity, delivering this newfound knowledge from the supernatural entity to other people.

Prophets in Islam include "messengers" bringers of a divine revelation via an angel lawbringers that Muslims believe were sent by God to every people, bringing God's message in a language they can understand. Muslims believe the first prophet was also the first human being, Adam (Adem). Many of the revelations delivered by the 48 prophets in Judaism and many prophets of Christianity are mentioned as such in the Quran.

Unique to Islam is Muhammad, who Muslims believe is the "Seal of the Prophets" (the last prophet); and the Quran, revealed to Muhammad.

In Muslim belief, every prophet in Islam preached the same main Islamic beliefs, the Oneness of God, worshipping of that one God, avoidance of idolatry and sin, and the belief in the Islamic Day of Resurrection or the Day of Judgement and life after death. Each came to preach Islam at different times in history and some told of the coming of the final *Islamic prophet and messenger* of Allah, who would be named "Ahmed" commonly known as Muhammad. Each Islamic prophet directed a message to a different group of people, and thus would preach Islam in accordance with the times

Judaism emphasizes the prophet's role as a speaker. The Talmud teaches that there were hundreds of thousands of prophets but Scripture identifies only 55 prophets of Israel.

A prophet is not necessarily a man. Scripture records the stories of seven female prophets, listed below, and the Talmud reports that Sarah's prophetic ability was superior to Abraham's.

According to some views, prophecy is not a gift that is arbitrarily conferred upon people; rather, it is the culmination of a person's spiritual and ethical development. When a person reaches a sufficient level of spiritual and ethical achievement, the Shechinah (Divine Spirit) comes to rest upon him or her. Likewise, the gift of prophecy leaves the person if that person lapses from his or her spiritual and ethical perfection.

The greatest of the prophets was Moses. It is said that Moses saw all that all of the other prophets combined saw, and more. Moses saw the whole of the Torah, including the Prophets and the Writings that were written hundreds of years later. All subsequent prophecy was merely an expression of what Moses had already seen. Thus, it is taught that nothing in the Prophets or the Writings can be in conflict with Moses' writings, because Moses saw it all in advance.

The Talmud states that the writings of the prophets will not be necessary in the World to Come, because in that day, all people will be mentally, spiritually and ethically perfect, and all will have the gift of prophecy.

In the Bible, prophets often had both a teaching and revelatory role, declaring God's truth on contemporary issues while also revealing details about the future.

More than 133 named prophets are mentioned in the Bible, including 16 women. In addition, numerous others prophesied, such as the 70 elders of Israel (Numbers 11:25) and the 100 prophets rescued by Obadiah (1 Kings 18:4). The first named prophet in the Bible is Abraham.

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Jacob and Joseph, descendants of Abraham, both had dreams regarding the future that could be categorized as prophetic. Moses was called a "man of God" and was considered a great prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10). Joshua and many of the judges served as prophets, with the last judge, Samuel, hearing the voice of God as a young boy (1 Samuel 3:4). He would later anoint David, who served as both king and prophet in Israel.

The time of Elijah and Elisha was marked by a high level of prophetic activity. In fact, a school for prophets thrived during their lifetimes (see 1 Kings 20:35). Both Elijah and Elisha performed many miracles as well.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist foretold the Messiah (Matthew 3:1). Jesus Himself came as prophet, priest, king, and Messiah, fulfilling many of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

A true prophet of God will be committed to speaking God's truth. He or she will never contradict God's revealed Word. A true prophet will say, with the prophet Micaiah just before his fateful confrontation with Ahab, "As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what my God says" (2 Chronicles 18:13).

Prophet Abraham:

Faith, Sacrifice, commitment and patience are the characteristics of Prophet Abraham. He is recognized in all three major religions and considered as a foundation stone in each religion. In this section we will see the role of Prophet Abraham in framing the structure of peace and order while laying the foundation of religion.

In Islam -

"Salam (peace) be upon Abraham!" God says in the Quran (37:109).

In Islam, Prophet Ibrahim is the friend of God and the father of Prophets (Ismail or Ishmael in English and Ishaq or Isaac and the grandfather of Prophet Yaqub or Jacob). He is also one of the ancestors of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

Anyone who rejects Prophet Ibrahim is not a true believer in Islam. Prophet Ibrahim plays a key role in this regard.

In terms of beliefs, a Muslim must believe in all of the Prophets. This includes not just Prophet Ibrahim, but his sons Ismail, Ishaq, his grandson Yaqub and of course his descendant Prophet Muhammad.

When it comes to the five pillars of Islam, the importance of Prophet Ibrahim becomes even more evident.

In Judaism -

Prophet Abraham is considered as the father of Jewish people.

According to Scripture, he was the son of Terah and the father of Isaac, who was born to Sarah, and he is also the father of Ishmael, who was born to Hagar.

A majority of contemporary scholars think that he lived in approximately the eighteenth-century before the Christian Era.

In the Jewish tradition, he is the father of the Jews and Judaism.

God's covenant with Abraham is expressed in the rite of circumcision (Genesis 17) and male Jewish children, to this day are, for the most part circumcised.

This act is called 'entry into the covenant of Abraham our father', and the name of the rite itself is the 'berit'; the 'covenant'.

Abraham is also considered the spiritual father of anyone who converts to Judaism. At a Jewish conversion ceremony, a convert is given a Hebrew name and is called a 'child of Abraham our father'.

In Christianity -

It is through the central figure of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) that Prophet Abraham is given prominence in the Christian tradition.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia Volume 1 (1999, Kevin Knight, online version), in the New Testament, the generation of Jesus Christ is traced back to Abraham by St. Matthew.

Similarly, as the New Testament traces Prophet Jesus' descent of Jesus to Prophet Abraham, it does the same of all Jews in terms of "carnal" descent.

Christians believe God first gave Abraham a son through a bond woman named Hagar. This son was named Ishmael. God gave him a second son from his barren wife Sarah. He was named Isaac.

According to Christian tradition, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac "to prove that he was 'worthy of becoming the father of a mighty nation, which would be as numerous as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore'".

Teachings:

The main aim of all the prophets was to spread peace and maintain brotherhood and social order in the society. Common teachings of Islam, Judaism and Christianity are as follows:-

- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are monotheistic religions, namely they believe that there is only one God. Jews and Muslims greatly stress the oneness and unity of God.
- The three religions believe that human beings are the highest creatures here on earth. We are the children of Abraham. God created us full of mystery, which means potential for continuous growth, both as a species and as individuals. We are capable of both good and evil. When we grow in goodness, righteousness, and love we become more like what God intended human goodness to be. When we abuse our freedom and do harm to other people, ourselves, and the environment it means that we are going against God's plans as we become evil-doers. Each person is capable, with God's help, to turn away from evil, repent, and do good. We owe God our devotion, glorification, and obedience.
- No matter how difficult the past and present may be, the three religions are hopeful about the future. Evil and suffering cannot ultimately prevail. God has provided a condition (or state of being) for which our three religions have different names, but we agree on the term Paradise. This future will bring about God's unchallenged rule; unconditional bliss for all who live with God.

- The three Abrahamic religions believe that God and human beings can and should communicate with each other. By revelation God communicates to people, among which the most important are revelation through prophets. These revelations are recorded in the Holy Scriptures of each religion. While the Holy Scriptures of the three religions are not the very same, nevertheless the younger two religions acknowledge God's truth as found in the previous religions, and encourage respect to the Holy Books. While each of the three religions does not merely focus on one set of writings, the key Scripture of Judaism is the Torah, the key Scripture of Christianity is the Bible, which consists of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) and the New Testament, and the key Scripture of Islam is the Qur'an. The duty of people is to read or listen to God's Holy Writings and to respond with prayer, praise, and with an appropriate acceptance of God's commandments in our life-style.
- God did not leave us without guidelines for behavior. God provided us with sound basic rules to live by as well as a rational mind to learn how and when to apply those rules to our everyday life. All three religions, for example, abhor murder, the arbitrary killing of innocent people. Likewise, God wants us to be telling the truth and not to take from others what rightfully belongs to them. We are to respect the dignity of every person and help especially those who are not capable of helping themselves, such as widows, orphans, and the poor. All three religions believe in Golden Rule: doing to others what we wish others do unto us. All three religions foster modesty, moderation, and honest work. We are to submit ourselves to the will of God.

All three religions closely link religion and morality. Religion is to be manifested by showing concern for the well-being and dignity of others, in a life of service to others, and in personal and social ethical behavior.

II. CONCLUSION

The concept of religion emerges out of disorder and restlessness in the then chaotic society. The Prophets Abraham is considered first prophet in all the three religions discussed in this paper. Moses, Jesus and Mohammed conveyed almost similar messages in the society. The main aim of each prophet was to maintain peace and brotherhood among humans. None of the prophet ever preached against humanity. But in today's world religion and the message of the prophets have been twisted and churned by the shrewd religious leaders for spreading hatred and animosity in the world. All three Abrahamic religions talks about one supreme God. The main purpose of all the prophets was to preach Peace and Humanity.

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