

# Sharing stories from Bible and Qur'an

You have before you a unique anthology of stories told in both the Bible and the Qur'an. It starts obviously with creation, which in both books took six Days or divine periods. It continues to describe the creation of man and woman, who in both books dwell in the Garden of Eden, until they are forced to leave paradise through a fault of their own. It figures the sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, and the first murder. Then the great flood is described which destroyed human and animal life on earth, except for those who had boarded the ark of Noah. In both books Abraham nearly sacrifices his son, and Lot confronts the lusty masses of Sodom. Joseph is left by his jealous brothers, sold as a slave to Egypt, there to rise to power. Both books relate his near seduction. Moses is put to water by his anxious mother in both books, later to save his people from Egyptian oppression. David fights Goliath in both books, becomes King and is a gifted psalmist. His extremely capable Solomon receives the queen of Sheba in both books. Job suffers and is healed and even Jonah gets swallowed by a big fish in Bible and Qur'an. The parallels continue in the New Testament. Zacharias receives heavenly news about the miraculous birth of his son John as Mary does about Jesus, who is well-loved and respected in both Christianity and Islam. Jesus lives a life of peace and healing, supported by his disciples in Bible and Qur'an. In both books God lifts him up to heaven, there to act as witness or judge on Judgment Day. Both books show how the inevitable reckoning of the individual's life and deeds follows a day of destruction, when earth and sky make way for heaven. Those on the left descend into hell in both books, and those on the right are lifted into paradise.

Thus this anthology follows the well known stories from the first Day to the Last; from Creation of the Universe to its destruction leading to the Day of Judgment. All these well known stories are told here as it were in their own words. Quotes have been taken from Qur'an and Bible and arranged to show the very similar storyline developing on both sides.

According to the Qur'an Jesus or 'Isa is emphatically not the son of God because God, typically unlike humankind, neither begets nor is begotten. Jesus, who is also called the Christ, the anointed one in the Qur'an, does not die on the cross. Indeed, 'Isa is a great prophet, born of the virgin Mary, who received a Holy book as did Moses and Muhammad. 'Isa is lifted up to Heaven as he is in the Bible. But neither he nor Muhammad or any other human being is, or indeed needs to be the Savior. In the Qur'an it is up to individual men and women to show remorse and to regain paradise by deserving it, as Adam and his wife did before them.

Such are the two stories behind the stories, similar in so many respects different in a few. It is for the reader, plodding steadily from Alpha to Omega, or browsing through the chapters at will, to compile a personal necklace from the gems Bible and Qur'an have on offer.

Thus the reader can follow the storyline from one chapter to another. The quotes are arranged here in a novel way: systematically side by side. The Bible quotes being the oldest are placed reverently on the left. The more recent Qur'an quotes are placed on the right. Sometimes the stories are not immediately parallel. Thus the Quranic story of fratricide refers to the sixth commandment which in the Hebrew Bible is linked to the story of Moses. Such digressions are recognizable by the different shade. The same method of selection and arrangement is used to deal with three legal issues that have been at the center of recent controversy: the position of women, penal law and international law, especially regarding war.

Law is often prohibitive. It tells us what not to do. A special chapter is reserved for a more positive approach to human behaviour: common values and virtues, formulated in both books to encourage motivating men and women to 'do their best'.

The first and last chapter, aptly named Alpha and Omega, deals with common attributes ascribed to God in both Bible and Qur'an. They act as it were as the starting and ending point of a rainbow, a divine arch over the stories and issues in which humankind is the central focus. Even the attributes of God are described in quotes, in 'the Author's own words', whoever that may be. In that sense, I am not the author of this anthology, simply its compiler.

For the reader's convenience, this compilation has been structured so that each chapter can be read separately. The parallel structure and subtitles make it possible to follow the similarities and differences closely, step by step. The stories are kept brief; some elaborations and most repetitions that occur in the Qur'an and the Bible are omitted, to increase readability. Careful mention of sources makes it easy for the reader to go back to the context in both books.

In spite of my objective of being objective, I must confess to an underlying subjective stance which has governed not only the selection, but the very idea of producing this anthology. My aim has been reconciliation through mutual understanding. I feel and hope that the charming and dramatic stories, common to both Bible and Qur'an and presented side by side in this anthology, will act as so many bridges, ready for anyone willing to cross.

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