

SAYYID MAWDUDI'S APPROACH TO BIBLICAL REPORTS: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Isra'iliyyat, or biblical reports undoubtedly play a key role in the interpretations of the Holy *Qur'ān*. That is because Isra'iliyyat provide detailed information of the past Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) in the Holy *Qur'ān*. Since biblical reports can range from sound to weak and even baseless in strengths, the Quranic interpreters have diverse stance regarding their acceptance. The prime purpose of this study is to explore the stance of Sayyid Mawdudi towards biblical reports. Sayyid Mawdudi had a balanced approach to it. He did not reject it outright; nor did he accept it totally without examination. He remained extremely cautious in dealing with it. He clearly identifies the similarities and differences between the Holy *Qur'ān* and the biblical reports; and in case of differences existing, decides on reports to be accepted. The study followed a textual analytical method to deal with the biblical reports quoted by Sayyid Mawdudi in his *Tafsīr*. It also used the original biblical reports from the Bible's New International Version, 'Al-Kitab al-Muqaddas' in Arabic, the Talmud and the Jewish Encyclopaedia to refer to the original sources of biblical reports and their own explanation of it. The study concluded that the biblical reports are indispensable parts of the interpretation of the Holy *Qur'ān*. They should not be rejected outright, nor should they be accepted without

thorough investigation. When compared to all contemporary and traditional scholars, it is found that Sayyid Mawdudi had an ideal stance towards biblical reports.

Keywords: *Biblical reports, Tafsīr literature, Sayyid Mawdudi, Tafhimul Qur'ān.*

1. Introduction

Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) is one of the most influential Islamic reformers of the 20th Century. His major contribution lies in presenting Islam to Muslim youths systematically and rationally, which could captivate their hearts and remove any confusions that may arise in their minds. *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is the magnum opus of his writings, in which he summarised his lifelong experience and knowledge that he had earned in his career in the Islamic Movement. Sayyid Mawdudi started writing his *Tafsīr* in February 1942 and completed it after almost 30 years in 1972.¹

The main feature of his *Tafsīr* lies in presenting the meaning and message of the Holy *Qur'ān* in a language and style that penetrates the hearts and minds of its readers and shows the relevance of the Holy *Qur'ān* to their day-to-day problems, both on the individual and societal levels. This *Tafsīr* has had a far-reaching impact on contemporary Islamic thought in general and in the Sub-continent in particular.²

Biblical reports or *Isra'iliyyat* refer to the reports in Torah, Bible, Talmud and other Judaeo-Christian origins. Since the Holy *Qur'ān* does not deal with the past nations and Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) in detail, most interpreters of the Holy *Qur'ān* have resorted to biblical reports to explain the Holy *Qur'ān*. Some have quoted from biblical sources without any verification, while others have opted for complete rejection. Some scholars preferred a moderate stand, not to reject it outright nor accept it without verification. Sayyid Mawdudi preferred this stance.

The Holy *Qur'ān* has been subject to biased orientalist claims that seek to portray it as a mere copy-and-paste rendition of biblical texts. These claims are unfounded and lack any rational basis, and their purpose is to deny the divine nature of the Holy *Qur'ān*. This study aims to investigate the purported "proofs" presented by biased orientalists in support of their claims. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether the Holy *Qur'ān* solely borrows from biblical sources or whether it also rectifies the problems and corruptions found therein. Investigating this issue is of utmost importance and is the fundamental motivation behind this study.

Sayyid Mawdudi stood firmly to deal with them and presented clear and convincing shreds of evidence to prove that the

Holy *Qur'ān* is the divine Book of Guidance, and it is in no way a copy of the earlier scriptures. He also pointed out some fundamental errors that the compilers of the Bible had made.

2. Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to introduce Sayyid Mawdudi's stance on biblical reports and to evaluate the methodology he adopted in his famous *Tafsīr Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*.

This study will also evaluate the position of *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* in the traditional and the rational *tafāsīr*. The author's level of agreement with the objectives of *Shari'ah*, the fundamentals of Islam, and prominent commentators of the Holy *Qur'ān* will also be assessed.

The study would also explore the criticisms of the orientalist who attempt to link the sources of the Holy *Qur'ān* to biblical reports and how Sayyid Mawdudi had strongly dealt with them.

It also analyzes the similarities and differences between the biblical reports and the Holy *Qur'ān*, the ultimate divine guidance of Allah Almighty.

3. Background and earlier research

Sayyid Mawdudi's magnum opus *Tafsīr* played the role of a fundamental reference of *Tafsīr* for modern-day Muslims, especially the youth. His target audience was not the scholars but the educated youths who wished to learn more about Islam but had no Quranic references for a fresh understanding of divine guidance.

Hence, he dealt with all modern challenges which appeared during his time. He presented convincing answers to all challenges and questions from orientalist, Muslim apologetics, feminists and anti-Islamic forces. There was an attempt to brand the Holy *Qur'ān* as nothing but a copy of the biblical narrations. As a proof, they tried to present the similarities between the Bible and the Holy *Qur'ān*, intentionally leaving out the fundamental differences between the Holy *Qur'ān* and the Bible. The biblical sources corrupted the personalities of their own prominent prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*). It is the Holy *Qur'ān*, the ultimate Divine Book of Guidance, that cleared all negative elements that existed in the Bible and cleared their Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) from such accusations.

Not much scholarly research was done on the *Tafsīr* of Mawdudi, though much research has already been carried out on Mawdudi's life and his thought. This study intends to introduce this fundamental aspect of his *Tafsīr* to the readers. What is the stance of *Tafsīr* scholars on biblical narrations, and how does it compare to the stance adopted by Mawdudi? While most traditional scholars

abstained from quoting the biblical reports, why did Mawdudi not follow the same path? Were there any benefits to his approach of including such quotes? Overall, a clear understanding of his *Tafsīr* is made throughout the study.

4. Literature review

Charles J. Adams wrote “*Abu'l A'la Mawdudi's Tafsīm al-Qur'ān*” in Andrew Ripin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*.³ He explained briefly the background, objective and style of *Tafsīm al-Qur'ān*. He also emphasized the detailed introduction and chief characteristic features of Mawdudi's *Tafsīr*, including its use of Hadith with extra emphasis on *fiqhi* issues, critical approach to *taṣawwuf*, and detailed quotations from biblical materials. Additionally, he noted Mawdudi's criticism of modern rationalist scholars and their rejection of miracles and supernatural issues. However, he was surprised that Mawdudi placed less emphasis on political issues in his *Tafsīr*.

Mustansir Mir, in his article “Some Features of Mawdudi's *Tafhim al-Qur'an*” in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*,⁴ highlighted notable features of *Tafhim* and explains Mawdudi's style of translation and commentary. He regarded the translation of Mawdudi in Urdu to be a superb one and his *Tafsīr* as a modern commentary. Mawdudi presented Islam as a complete way of life and outlined its various aspects systematically and rationally. His major contribution lies in showcasing Islam's relevance to the practical daily problems of today's man.

Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari wrote a comprehensive article titled “Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi: an Introduction to his vision of Islam and Islamic Revival” in *Islamic Perspectives*.⁵ This paper outlined Mawdudi's life precisely in Part I, explains his vision of Islam in general in Part II, and details his vision of Islamic Revival and the process of the Islamic revolution in Part III. The second and third parts were written in the lifetime of Mawdudi and were presented at international conferences by Zafar Ishaq in 1976 and Khurshid Ahmad in 1977, respectively.

Alifuddin Turabi, an ex-deputy leader of Jama'at Islami in Kashmir, wrote on the life and Da'wah of Sayyid Mawdudi, entitled *Abul A'la al-Mawdudi: Hayatuhu wa Da'watuhu*.⁶ He gave the socio-political and religious background of the Indo-Pak subcontinent in the 20th Century, which Mawdudi encountered with. He also explained the basic characteristics, principles, and stages of Mawdudi's *Da'wah* work in India and Pakistan.

Alifuddin Turabi also wrote a comprehensive treatise on *Al-Ustadh Abul A'la al-Mawdudi wa Manhajuhu fi Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Karīm*,⁷ [Sayyid Mawdudi and his methodology in Qur'anic

interpretation] for Masters in Ummul Qura University. It comprises 652 pages and includes the details of the life, mission, and struggle of Sayyid Mawdudi in the first part, and about his *Tafsīr*, and a detailed methodology in the second part. It provides a detailed exposition of Sayyid Mawdudi's interpretation of the Holy *Qur'ān*. It explains that Mawdudi's *Tafsīr* followed a modern approach to Quranic interpretation, which combines traditional and rational approaches as well.

Gias Uddin Hafiz also wrote an article on “*Manhaj al-Ustaz al-Mawdudi fi Tafsirihi Tafhim al-Qur'an*”⁸ [Methodology of Ustaz Mawdudi in his *Tafsīr Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*] published in IIUC Journal, where he presented a summary of the *Tafsīr* of Sayyid Mawdudi and his methodology. It is a precise yet comprehensive presentation of Sayyid Mawdudi's *Tafsīr* methodology.

Some scholars wrote critically about Mawdudi's *Tafsīr*. Some of them blamed him for ‘politicizing the Holy *Qur'ān*’ or ‘presenting the Holy *Qur'ān* for political motives’, while others pinpointed the faults from his *Tafsīr* of the Holy *Qur'ān*.

For example, Wahiduddin Khan wrote a book, *Khata' fi al-Tafsīr*,⁹ [Fault in Tafsīr], to criticize Mawdudi's comprehension of *Din* and his over-emphasis on establishing the Islamic state as the sole mission of the Prophets to be a deviated interpretation of Islam. He tried to communicate with Sayyid Mawdudi through letters to debate such issues. Still, Sayyid Mawdudi did not respond to most of his letters, as Wahiduddin had already made up his mind and scholarly debates would be fruitless with him. This made him furious and led to the publication of the said book to criticize almost all ideas of Mawdudi including his *Tafsīr*.

In the similar line, Abul Hassan ‘Ali al-Nadwi also wrote another book *Al-Tafsīr al-Siyasi li al-Islam*¹⁰ [Political interpretation of Islam], where he condemned Mawdudi's interpretation of *Din* from a political perspective. He strongly criticized Mawdudi's position on *Tafsīr* and even sent him a copy of his own book after its publication. Mawdudi appreciated the gesture and asked Shaykh Nadwi to review his writings and identify any shortcomings or weaknesses.

This shows that Sayyid Mawdudi faced different types of people who either strongly supported him or vehemently opposed him. The current study will try to objectively analyze his stance while dealing with biblical reports in his *Tafsīr*.

5. Methodology

This research follows a descriptive, analytical, objective, and critical methodology in dealing with the *Tafsīr* of Mawdudi. It will focus mainly on textual research based on the *Tafsīr* of Mawdudi,

traditional and modern *tafsir*, other writings of Mawdudi, and biblical sources.

This research uses the analytical approach in dealing with the *Tafsir* of Mawdudi. It acknowledges, appreciates, and sometimes critically evaluates the viewpoints of Mawdudi in his *Tafsir*.

This study will objectively evaluate the position of *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* in the traditional and the rational *tafsir*. It will assess the extent to which the author agrees with the objectives of *Shari'ah*, the fundamentals of Islam, and the interpretations of prominent traditional commentators of the Holy *Qur'ān*.

The primary focus of the study is to look into his approach to biblical reports based on his *Tafsir Tafhīm-ul-Qur'ān*. The study also used the original biblical reports from the Bible's New International Version and '*Al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas*' in Arabic to examine its authenticity. It also referred to Talmud and the Jewish Encyclopaedia to refer to the original sources of biblical reports and their own explanation. This is to confirm the validity of the reports quoted by Sayyid Mawdudi from biblical sources.

5.1. *Isra'iliyyat* in *Tafsir* literature

Isra'iliyyat refers to Judaeo-Christian reports in Biblical traditions such as *Torah*, *Injil*, *Zabūr* and *Talmūd*. *Talmūd* is the explanations, interpretations, and implementations of Torah rules and regulations, which are developed by Jewish scholars from time to time.¹¹

The *Torah*, *Injil* and *Zabūr*, and the Holy *Qur'ān*, are undoubtedly revelations of Allah Almighty. However, over time, they have been altered by their respective followers, either due to loss or changes made to their laws to fit changing circumstances. Since they were not meant to be eternal Books of guidance, Allah Almighty did not preserve them from being changed or distorted. When the previous Prophet's teachings get distorted, Allah Almighty usually sends a new Messenger (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) and a new Message. Since the Prophet (*Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātam un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā 'Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) was the final messenger, and the Holy *Qur'ān* is the eternal guidance for entire mankind till the Final Moment of the Earth, the Holy *Qur'ān* is preserved by Allah Almighty. In Surah al-Hijr, Allah Almighty confirms:

*"We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'ān), and We are there to protect it."*¹²

This is to confirm that all humankind is not deprived of the true message of Allah Almighty at any point in time.

In the Biblical traditions, in the Five Books of Torah, details of stories of the past prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) are provided (albeit some of them got mixed up with false narrations). *Tafsīr* writers resorted to all those details to explain the stories of the Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) mentioned in the Holy *Qur'ān*. Naturally, the Holy *Qur'ān* does not detail the stories of the past prophets, except the story of Moses and Joseph (*'Alaihim As-Salām*). The interpreters of the Holy *Qur'ān* mentioned whatever details they got from different sources, especially from Biblical traditions. These reports emerged into *Tafsīr* traditions through some Biblical scholars who converted to Islam, such as 'Abdullah bin Salam¹³, Ka'ab al-Ahbar¹⁴, Wahab bin Munabbih,¹⁵ and others.

Depending on the Prophet's hadith, it is not haram to quote from Isra'ili narrations, but one must be cautious while narrating from them. The Prophet (*Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā 'Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) is reported to have said:

*"Deliver the message from me, even if it is only a verse of the Qur'an; and relate traditions from the Bani Isra'il, for there is no restriction; but remember, whoever deliberately lies against me, should select his abode in hellfire."*¹⁶

Also, the Prophet (*Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā 'Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) asked them not to believe blindly whatever they report nor to reject everything outright. He is reported to have said:

"Narrated Abu Huraira: He said that the people of the Book used to read the Torah in Hebrew and expound it in Arabic to the Muslims, so God's messenger said, "Neither believe nor disbelieve the people of the Book, but say, "We believe in God and what has been sent down to us..."¹⁷

Hence, it is clear that the reports from *Ahl-e Kitāb*, the people of the Book, can be reported, but with caution. We should not reject all their reports, as they may contain the truth. Also, we should not accept whatever they narrate, as it might result from their temptations, corruptions, and modifications.

5.2. Isra'iliyyat in *Tafhīm-ul-Qur'ān*

Sayyid Mawdudi was not among those who rejected *Isra'iliyyat* or Biblical reports outrightly. Neither was he among those who accepted all its reports with no proper investigation. He extensively quoted the Hebrew and Christian Bibles to compare them and the Holy *Qur'ān*. By doing so, he aimed to explain certain issues more vividly, highlight differences between the texts, and refute the claim made by some Orientalists that the Holy *Qur'ān* is a duplicate

of the Hebrew or Christian Bibles. Additionally, he used these quotations to clear the prophets of Allah (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) from the accusations made against them in the tampered version of the Bible and to correct false notions that may have arisen from its misinterpretation.

Charles J. Adams says about this feature of *Tafhīm*:

“Another striking feature of the Tafsîr is its citation and use of materials from the Bible, both the Hebrew and the Christian Bibles. While it may generally be true that modern Muslims and Indian Muslims, in particular, have shown little inclination to study the Bible closely or to deal with it in terms of what it says, Mawdudi exhibits a close acquaintance with the text. In connection with certain Quranic verses, he quotes the Bible in extension, the quoted passages being sometimes several pages in length.”¹⁸

6. To Strengthen and Explain Certain Issues

He quoted Israeli reports to strengthen and explain the Quranic *ayāt* (verses) about Bani Isra'īl and their prophets; for narrations from their books to explain their situations are much more impactful and convincing to all. The Quranic *ayāt* was always taken as the guiding book for reference and reports from Bible were used to support and strengthen the Quranic expressions.

For example, in the case of Bani Isra'īl's mischief, as has been referred to in the *ayah* 4 of *Surah* Isra' (17), many reports from the Bible in which their own Prophets such as David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) and finally the warning of Jesus before his crucifixion, as they believe, were cited by Mawdudi.

The Prophet Jesus (*'Alaih As-Salām*), for example, criticized their moral degeneration in an address like this:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”¹⁹

Then when the Roman officials were taking Prophet Jesus (*'Alaih As-Salām*) out for crucifixion, and a great number of people, including women, were following him wailing and lamenting, he addressed them and gave his final warnings:

“..But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your

children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us: and to the hills, Cover us.’²⁰

In the verse of *Surah Baqarah*, Allah Almighty refers to the inherent character of Bani Isra’il and says:

*“Then they were stamped with disgrace and misery, and they returned with wrath from Allah. That was because they used to deny the signs of Allah, and would slay the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and transgressed all limits.”*²¹

In support of Allah's word that *they killed His Messengers*, Sayyid Mawdudi provided references from the Bible to support his claims of the killing, torturing, and imprisoning of the prophets by their own people. He also related the tortures or killings inflicted upon the Prophet Elijah, Hanani, Micaiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Jesus himself. Quoting the killing of John the Baptist, he says:

“When John the Baptist raised his voice against the immoralities openly practiced in the court of Herod, king of Judah, he was arrested and bound in prison. Then at the request of Herodias, his wife, who had a grudge against him, he sent one of the guards to bring his head. The man went and beheaded him in prison and brought his head on a dish to be presented to her. Thus, the Holy Prophet of God was killed without any cause.”²²

7. To Mark Differences between the Quranic and Biblical Reports

He presented a comparison between the Holy *Qur’ān* and the biblical reports and showed which one was more accurate, authentic, and fit for the nature and status of the Prophets. In *Surah Maryam*, the story of the birth of Yahya (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) (John the Baptist) and the answer to the prayer of his father Zakaria (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) were presented. As a sign from Allah Almighty, Zakaria (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) was made dumb for three nights and days and asked to perform Allah's praises with his people. While quoting the story from the Bible, Mawdudi also highlighted the differences between the two versions of the story in parentheses. He quotes from *Luke* as follows:

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth... And they had no child because Elisabeth was barren, and they

both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; (there is no mention of Zacharias' prayer anywhere in the Bible) and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John (that is, Yahya). And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord (Sayyidan: a great Leader according to the Qur'an, Aal-e-'Imran: 39), and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink (the Qur'anic version, Taqiyyan: pious and pure); and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb (the Qur'an says: We blessed him with "judgment" while he was yet a child'). And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God..."

"And Zacharias said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife struck in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb and unable to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. (This is different from the Qur'an, which gives it as a Sign, whereas according to Luke, it was a punishment. Moreover, the Qur'an mentions it as the silence for 'three consecutive days', but Luke says that Zacharias remained dumb till the birth of John). And the people waited for Zacharias and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them and remained speechless."²³

In *surah An'ām*, while he interprets the *ayat* in which Ibrahim (*'Alaih As-Salām*) was shown to be searching for *hidayah* and looked upon stars, moon, and the sun, and finally resorted to Allah the All-Powerful as the only God of Universe, Sayyid Mawdudi after presenting his commentary on the verses, said that this most important event of the life of Ibrahim (*'Alaih As-Salām*) was not mentioned at all in the Bible. However, the *Talmūd* mentioned it with two basic differences: Firstly, the order in the *Talmūd* is "from the sun to the stars and God," but the order for the stars and the sun is the other way around in the Holy *Qur'ān*. Secondly, it states that he said

about the sun, “This is my Lord, he worshipped it also at the same time and did the same with the moon.”²⁴

In *surah Yusuf*, Allah Almighty mentions the noblest story of Yusuf [Joseph] (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) in detail. The King of Egypt finally called on him to interpret his strange yet wonderful dream, which he did nicely. The King was influenced by the knowledge and wisdom of Yusuf (*‘Alaih As-Salām*), so much so that he offered him a prestigious position in the country and placed all resources of the country under his trust. Sayyid Mawdudi highlights the fact that the most important part of the story of Prophet Yusuf (*‘Alaih As-Salām*), in which he refuses to leave prison until his character is cleared, is not mentioned in either the Bible or the Talmūd and the Bible and Talmūd, Yusuf (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) is portrayed as being so overwhelmed and intimidated by the grandeur of Pharaoh's court that he is unable to speak directly to the king and the King had to come down to the third step and from there he spoke with Yusuf (*‘Alaih As-Salām*).²⁵

Sayyid Mawdudi, after quoting from *Talmūd* comments by saying:

“Comparing the degrading picture in the *Talmūd* with this self-respecting, grand, and noble picture depicted in the Holy *Qur’ān* will convince every unbiased critic that the one in the Holy *Qur’ān* is worthy of a Prophet of God. Moreover the picture in the *Talmūd* is open to a grave objection: Had Prophet Joseph (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) behaved like a frightened and cringing lad who was so dazzled by the glitter and glare of the jewels of the throne that he bowed to the ground, how was it that the king and the courtiers were so impressed by him that they declared, “...The Hebrew has proved himself wise and skilful and through his wisdom shall our country be saved from the pangs of want”? So much so that the King appointed him, without demur, as “governor” over the land, “second only to himself”. All this shows that by that time he had proved his moral and mental superiority and had enhanced it by his refusal to quit the prison without proving his innocence. Otherwise, they would have never raised him to the highest rank in such a civilized and advanced country as Egypt.”²⁶

8. To Refute the Claim that the Holy *Qur’ān* is but a copy of the Bible

Sayyid Mawdudi emphasized rejecting the claim of those who said that the Holy *Qur’ān* has just copied the stories of the earlier Prophets and nations from the Bible. In doing so, he often marked the differences between the Holy *Qur’ān* and the Biblical reports. He put it to the sound mind and conscience of the people to look and ponder

whether the Holy *Qur'ān* could ever be copied from the Biblical stories. The Holy *Qur'ān* instead validates the un-tampered statements of the Bible and corrects its false and adulterated elements, which have been added to it by its own followers.

9. Story of Adam and Eve

The Holy *Qur'ān* mentions the story of the creation of Adam and Eve (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) in a few places and gives a detailed picture of the origin of human creation. The Bible also mentions the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 2, verses 7-25, and in chapter 3, verses 1-23. Sayyid Mawdudi devotes much space to quoting the narration of the Bible regarding Adam and Eve's creation and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. According to Biblical reports, they were forbidden from the 'Tree of knowledge of good and evil', and if they eat from it, they would surely die. They both were naked in the garden, and they only came to know of it after eating from the forbidden tree and felt ashamed thereof. It also states clearly that the person responsible for eating from the tree was Eve by the temptation of the serpent, who, after eating from it, also gave to her husband, who readily enjoyed it. Later the serpent, Eve, and Adam all were punished by God, which is to be continued and carried by all their progeny on Earth.²⁷

It is very much clear that the Biblical statements contradict many Quranic *ayāt*. The Holy *Qur'ān* holds both Adam and Eve responsible for the offense. In the Bible, God warns Adam and Eve that they will surely die if they eat from the forbidden tree. However, this does not come to pass, leading to accusations of falsehood against God himself by the authors of the Bible. Sayyid Mawdudi comments on Biblical reports:

“It is obvious that the Bible has not done justice to Adam and Eve, nay, even to God Himself. On the other hand, the account given in the Holy *Qur'ān* is itself a clear proof that the stories given in it have not been copied from the Bible; for the Holy *Qur'ān* not only corroborates those parts of the Bible which have remained untampered but also corrects its wrong statements.”²⁸

10. Ibrahim (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) cast into fire

In *surah al-Anbia'* Allah Almighty mentions the story of Ibrahim (*'Alaihim As-Salām*), his preaching before his nation and Nimrod, debate on the issue of divinity, demolishing their idols and finally being cast into the fire and coming out by the Mercy of Allah Almighty safe and unharmed, startling the public. Sayyid Mawdudi, while dealing with various aspects of Ibrahim's life from a Quranic standpoint, also provides detailed quotations from the Bible and later from the *Talmūd*. He says:

“This important event of the life of Prophet Abraham [i.e. casting into the fire] has found no mention whatever in the Bible. In fact, nothing about his life in Iraq — his conflict with Nimrod, his father and the community at large, his efforts to eradicate idolatry, the incident of his being cast into the fire, which ultimately led to his forced exile from the country—is mentioned anywhere in the Bible. The Bible merely mentions his migration, and that too, in a manner as if a family was migrating from one country to another in search of livelihood. There is another interesting difference between the *Qur’ān* and the Bible. According to the *Qur’ān*, the father of Abraham, who was a mushrik, was foremost in tyrannizing over his son, but the Bible is totally silent about the father’s role towards the mission of Abraham. The *Talmūd*, however, gives quite a few details about the life of Prophet Abraham (*‘Alaihim As-Salām*) during the period of his stay in Iraq, which is generally the same as given in the *Qur’ān*, but there is a glaring discrepancy in some of the important events. In fact, one can clearly feel that the account given in the Talmud is full of heterogeneous and hypothetical things, while the one given in the *Qur’an* is most clear and contains nothing unworthy of Prophet Abraham. This also removes the misunderstanding of those who think that the *Qur’an* has borrowed stories from the Bible or Jewish literature.”²⁹

Mawdūdi has shown clearly that one who reads the Quranic *ayāt* besides those in the Bible and the Talmud with a sound unbiased mind would see the truthfulness of the Quranic statements and that the Bible could have never been a sourcebook for the Holy *Qur’ān*.

11. Yusuf (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) and the Lady of Egypt

The story of Yusuf (*‘Alaih As-Salām*) is detailed in the Holy *Qur’ān*, which corrects many of the wrong statements mentioned about him in the Bible. While he was under the custody of Aziz of Egypt, the lady of ‘Aziz tried to tempt him to fulfill her desire, which he turned down and resorted to Allah for help. Surah Yusuf tells the story of Yusuf, a benefactor of Bani Isra’il who established them in an honorable position in Egypt. But the report of Biblical statements is degrading to his nobility and character. Sayyid Mawdudi quotes from the Bible the following:

“And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them saying, see, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in

unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home... And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound."³⁰

After quoting the above statement from the Bible, Sayyid Mawdudi comments as follows:

"The clumsy manner of the above version is obvious. It appears that Prophet Joseph's garment was so shaped that the whole of it fell into her hands when she tugged it. Then he ran away all naked, leaving it with her as if to supply her with clear proof of his own guilt... Incidentally, this Quranic version of the story is clear proof that it has no copied stories from the Israelite traditions as the pseudo-Orientalists allege, but has, on the other hand, corrected them and told the real facts to the world."³¹

12. The Story of Sulayman (*'Alaih As-Salām*)

Allah Almighty mentions the story of Sulayman (*'Alaih As-Salām*) in *Surah Naml* (27), verses 16-44, in fair detail. Sayyid Mawdudi quotes from the Biblical literature to show the differences between the Holy *Qur'ān* and their reports.

Regarding the story of Sulayman (*'Alaih As-Salām*) with the ants and his ability to comprehend their speech Mawdudi comments on the Biblical reports the following:

"This story is also found in the Israelite traditions but its latter portion falls against the Qur'an as well as against the regal dignity of the Prophet Solomon. According to it, when the Prophet Solomon was passing through a valley which abounded in ants, he heard an ant calling out to the other ants to say, "Get into your holes, otherwise you will be trampled down by Solomon's hosts." At this, Prophet Solomon displayed great vanity before the ant to which the ant rejoined, "What are you? the product of a mere sperm-drop!" Hearing this the Prophet Solomon felt greatly ashamed.³² This shows how the Qur'an corrects the wrong traditions of the Israelites and cleanses the filthy spots with which they had themselves branded the characters of their Prophets. It is these traditions about which the Western Orientalists shamelessly claim that the Qur'an has plagiarized them for its narratives."³³

13. To Correct the Wrong Statements of the Bible

Sayyid Mawdudi was quoted from the Bible to illustrate many issues and show how the Holy *Qur'ān* had cleared their Prophets from all the filths that they had attributed to their heroes – the Prophets. There could hardly be found a Prophet of Bani Isra'il, whose life story was not adulterated by his followers. Serious moral and ethical corruption were attributed to their lives, which would make him ashamed and disgraced if attached to a common man. Mawdudi shows in practical terms how the Holy *Qur'ān* has greatly favored Bani Isra'il and their Prophets by clearing them from all serious moral setbacks and degenerations falsely attributed to them.

14. Prophet Lot ('Alaih As-Salām) and His Mission

Prophet Lot ('Alaih As-Salām) was the nephew of Prophet Ibrahim ('Alaih As-Salām). He left Iraq with his uncle and traveled with him over Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to gain experience in Message propagation. Then Allah appointed him as a Messenger and sent him to reform the wicked tribe of Sodom, called 'his people' because he might have had some blood relation with it.

Sayyid Mawdudi directs to a grave flaw in the Biblical statements, which characterizes Lot's migration to the plains of Jordan to search for fertile land for his cattle. Mawdudi says:

“It is a pity that in the existing Bible, which has been tampered with By the Jews, the character of Prophet Lot has been blemished. Besides other things, even his mission to the plains of Jordan has been described as a migration to a fertile land after “a strife between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle”.³⁴ But the Qur'an refutes this allegation and says that Lot was appointed a Messenger and was sent there in order to reform those people.”³⁵

15. Conflict in Biblical statements

In the commentary of *Surah Baqarah* (2) *ayah* 55 and 56, Sayyid Mawdudi points to a serious conflict of Biblical statement about the meeting of Chiefs (*Naqīb*) of Bani Isra'il with God. When Moses received the revelation of Allah in Mount Tor and presented this to the seventy chiefs of Bani Isra'il, whom he had chosen from the nobles of Bani Isra'il and brought to Mount Tur, they refused to accept it as God's revelation. Mawdudi says:

“The Qur'an says that at that time, some wicked people from among them began to remark to this effect, “How can we believe, on a mere statement of yours, that Allah had a talk with you?” Allah was very angry with them for their insolence and punished them. But the Bible says, “And they

saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel, he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink".³⁶ Strange though it may appear, the same Bible also tells us that Moses said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." But He said, "Thou canst not see my face, for no man shall see me, and live."³⁷

This marks a serious conflict in Biblical statements that the general people of Bani Isra'il were honored by God to dine with them, but while Moses appealed for it, he was declined!

16. Did Allah Almighty take rest after the Creation of the Universe?

Allah Almighty condemns those who refute the possibility of Life after Death in *Surah Qaf* and says:

*"We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness even touched Us. So, (O Prophet) endure with patience what they say, and proclaim His purity, along with your Lord's praise, before sunrise and sunset."*³⁸

In the above *ayāt*, Allah Almighty made it clear that He made the whole Universe in six days. Without facing any fatigue and weariness, it is definitely much easier for him to reconstruct the Universe whenever He wants. Sayyid Mawdudi points out here an adulteration in the Biblical statements and says:

In this verse, there is a subtle taunt on the Jews and the Christians as well, in whose Bible, a story has been fabricated about God making the earth and the heavens in six days and resting on the seventh day.³⁹ Even though Christian priests have revised their Urdu translation of the Holy Bible by replacing the word "rested" with "*farigh hua*" (ceased from working), indicating their embarrassment over the inaccuracy, yet in King James Authorized Version of the Bible, the words "...and He rested on the seventh day" are still there. The same words are also found in the translation that the Jews have published from Philadelphia in 1934. In the Arabic translation, the words are *fa-staraha fi-l-yaum as sabi'* (then he rested on the seventh day).⁴⁰

17. Prophet Sulayman ('*Alaih As-Salām*) and the Queen of Sheba

The story of Sulayman is mentioned in *Surah Naml* in fair detail. Sayyid Mawdudi quotes the Biblical statements and points out their adulteration of the holy Books. While he mentioned the aspects

that are similar to what is mentioned in the Holy *Qur'ān*, he also highlights the differences in the following terms:

“There is no mention whatsoever in these traditions of the Prophet Solomon's reply on receipt of the gift, having the queen's throne fetched from Ma'rib, his bowing down before God in thankfulness for every favor of His, and the queen's embracing the Faith ultimately at his hand, his belief in the oneness of God, etc. And, worst of all, the wicked ones from them have accused Prophet Solomon of committing adultery, God forbid, with the queen of Sheba, giving rise to an illegitimate race, which gave birth to Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, who destroyed Jerusalem.”⁴¹

The Bible presenting him only as a king instead of a Prophet is part of propaganda; a king who was lost in the love of polytheistic women against the Divine Commandments, whose heart was turned away from God, and who was turned to other gods and goddesses.⁴²

A person of sound mind could easily see what great favour the Holy *Qur'ān* done to the Isra'ilites by cleansing the personalities of their elders of the filths thrown at them by themselves, and yet the Isra'ilites, ungrateful as they are, look upon the Holy *Qur'ān* and the Prophet Muhammad (*Hadrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātam un Nabiyyīn Ṣallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) who received it as their enemies.

18. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it could be concluded that the Judaeo-Christian reports shedding some details on the Quranic narratives [*al-Qaṣaṣ*]. Sometimes, the Bible remains silent, but the Holy *Qur'ān* furnishes important events in the life of some particular prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*). Naturally, the Holy *Qur'ān* did not furnish details to the stories. The Holy *Qur'ān* did not narrate stories for amusement; rather, to derive fundamental lessons from the past Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*). Indeed, all Prophets invited their nations to identical divine guidance. Allah Almighty confirms it as a concluding remark in Surah Yousuf and says:

*Surely, in the narratives of these, there is a lesson for the people of understanding. It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of everything, and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.*⁴³

There are clear contradictions between the biblical reports and the Quranic texts in many issues. A sound-minded reader could easily derive which report should be authentic, which is not, or which

is fit for the Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) and their personalities, and which are not.

The biblical narrations have mentioned some reports about some of their prominent Prophets (*'Alaihim As-Salām*) that could baffle a common reader with their strangeness. The beauty and the favor of the Holy *Qur'ān* on the people of the Book that the Jewish Prophets were freed from such filthy accusations.

It is to be noted that the Torah, *Injīl*, *Zabūr*, and the Holy *Qur'ān* are all divine revelations; it is a common phenomenon that some similarities would undoubtedly persist. Allah Almighty has highlighted all important matters of *'Aqīdah*, *'Ibādah*, *Risālah* or Prophethood, day of Judgment, history, and noble character in all divine guidance. To get pure divine guidance, an individual should resort only to the message of the Holy *Qur'ān* today, as it is the only divine book that remains intact, unadulterated, and free from corruption. This guidebook would bring the slaves of Allah Almighty closer to Him, shed divine guidance, and show them the path that will pave the way to eternal blessings and mercy in this world and hereafter.

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- ¹¹ Abu Shuhbah, Muhammad, *Al-Isra'iliyyat wa al-Mawdu'at fi al-Tafsir* (Cairo: Maktabat as-Sunnah, n.d.), 13.
- ¹² *The Holy Qur'an, surah 15: ayat 9*, Translated by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (Karachi: Maktaba Ma'ariful Quran, 2010).

- ¹³ ‘Abdullah bin Salam (d. 43AH): a prominent *sahabi* [companion] of the Prophet, an ex-Jewish Rabbi from the clan of Bani Qaynuqa`, one of the Ten blessed companions of the Prophet who were declared to be from the residents of Paradise (*Sunan Tirmidhi*: 3804, grade: *sahih*). He was among the first people who visited the Prophet right after the migration of the Prophet and had firm faith that the Prophet was a true Messenger of Allah (SWT). Right after that, he converted to Islam. He died in 43AH; Shamsuddin Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A`lam al-Nubala`* (Beirut: Mu`wassasat ar-Risalah, 1405AH/1985AC), 1/298; Raghīb al-Sarjani, *Al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, Al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 18/5, <https://al-maktaba.org/book/32238/215> (accessed on 31 October 2022).
- ¹⁴ Ka`ab al-Ahbar (72BH-32AH): a Jewish Rabbi from Yemen, lived for 102 years, converted to Islam in the time of Abu Bakar or ‘Umar (*Ra`i Allah ‘anhumÉ*), lived in Madinah in the period of ‘Umar and spread the knowledge of Torah and the earlier books and narratives: sound, unsound, weak and false, which spread among the Muslims. Abu Hurayrah, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas, and Mu`awiyah (*Ra`i Allah ‘anhum*) grasped this knowledge from him. He learned *ahadith* from the companions of the Prophet. Imam Tabari praised him due to his vast knowledge and Ibn Taymiah. Later he moved to Homs of Sham and died in 32AH, just one year before the *shahadah* of Caliph ‘Uthman (R.A.); Khairuddin Mahmud al-Zarkali, *Al-A`laam* (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li al-Malayeen, 15th ed. 2002AC), 5/228; Muhammad bin Jarir Tabari, *Tafsir Tabari*, Surah Maryam: 28, 18/187; Ibn Taymiah, *Daqa`iq al-Tafsir*, (Damascus: Mu`assasat ‘Ulum al-Qur’an, 1404), 2/282.
- ¹⁵ Wahab bin Munabbih (34AH-110/114AH): He was from the 3rd generation of Tabi’un from Yemen. It was reported that his father accepted Islam in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and lived in Yemen. Wahab bin Munabbih was a great scholar of the past divine books and the past nations. He is regarded to be one primary source of Isra’ili narrations. He opted for Sufism in his later life. Imam Bukhari, Muslim, and all hadith scholars reported *ahadith* from him. He died in Sana’a of Yemen in 110AH, as mentioned by Ibn Kathir, or 114AH, as quoted by Dhahabi; Abdur Rahman bin Khaldun, *Tarikh ibn Khaldun* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1408AH/1988AC), 2/179; Abul Fida’ Isma’il Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1408AH/1988AC), 9/305.
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- ²¹ *The Holy Qur’an, surah 2: ayat 61*.
- ²² *Bible*, Mark 6: 17-29; *Tafhīm*, vol. 1, Surah Baqarah (2), note 79.
- ²³ *Tafhīm*, Surah Maryam (19), note 8. *Bible*, Luke, 1:5-22.
- ²⁴ *Tafhīm*, vol. 1, Surah An’aam (6), note 55.
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- ²⁸ *Tafhīm*, vol. 3, Surah Taha (20), note 106.
- ²⁹ *Tafhīm*, vol. 3, Surah Anbia’ (21), note 66; *Bible*, Genesis 11:27-32, 12:1-20, 17:17.
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