

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

IS THE NAME 'AHMAD' FOUND IN THE BIBLE?

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A BRIEF BACKGROUND

The Quran makes use of the name 'Muhammad' only **four times** in the entire scripture (3:144, 33:40, 47:2, 48:29). However, in verse 61:6, the reader notes a narrative captured where Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) speaks of a messenger to come after him by the name 'Ahmad'.

Muslim theologians throughout history have understood this to be a reference to Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh) drawing on the similarity of the root word and looking for support from the Bible.

As there is no mention of this name in the Bible, critics uphold the claim that the Quranic verse is incorrect. In more extreme cases, the whole veracity of the Quran is challenged on the basis that there is an absence of any such reference in the Bible.

Extreme challenges often require extreme measures and one notes many different theories that have been advanced by Muslims to explain the absence of a suitable reference. Some of these explanations include the charge of possible corruption of Biblical terms or of deliberate obfuscation by the Biblical writers. This assertion **in this context** is somewhat compromised when there exists complete Bible manuscripts which predate Prophet Muhammad's^(pbuh) ministry by many centuries which do not seem to support such a hypothesis.

Equally, it is intellectually preposterous to suggest from a critical perspective that the source of the Quran (which the Muslim's believe to be God), could have made such a **fundamental mistake** with respect to the previous scriptures by including a reference to the name 'Ahmad' which did not exist in the scriptures being read at the time of the Prophet's ministry.

Such a Quranic statement **could have easily been referenced** by the followers of the previous scriptures and if found wanting, would have been **blatantly refuted** with a charge of false prophethood against the Arabian Prophet.

We note no such charge captured by the Quran with respect to this statement where many other charges have been duly rebutted by the Quran. It is to be further noted, that neither do we find any clarification to this verse in the Quran nor was this verse ever culled from the Quran for deletion which leads one to the possible conclusion that the veracity of the verse was acceptable to its audience.

Such a fundamental theological clarification based on a contention could have easily been cited by the Quran, especially when we note other clarifications in the Scripture. See verse 4:127 where a clarification on a practical matter is given - "And they seek your ruling concerning women. Say: God gives you the ruling about them and what is recited to you in the Book concerning ..." In other verses, one notes many instances where the Quran addresses direct questions and charges put forward by the contemporaries of the Prophet.

Therefore, the audience of the Quran **clearly understood** the verse **without any need to raise an objection** which could have possibly necessitated a Quranic clarification.

A SUPERFICIAL ASSOCIATION

The two verses at the core of the matter under discussion are verses **61:6** and **7:157** which Muslim theologians have long assumed to be interrelated.

Verse 1	Verse 2
<p>061.006 "And when, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me (Arabic: min ba'di), whose name shall be Ahmad." But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, "this is evident sorcery!""</p>	<p>007:157 "Those who follow the Messenger , the gentile (Arabic: <u>Umiyya</u>) Prophet whom they find written down with them (Arabic: maktuban indahum) in the Torah and Gospels (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so (as for) those who believe in him and honour him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful"</p>

Many Muslim theologians unnecessarily attempt to reconcile verse 61:6 with 7:157 and expect the name 'Ahmad' mentioned in 61:6 to be written in the Gospels on the strength of verse 7:157.

There is no conclusive warrant for this interpretation other than by way of a superficial association. The mention of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) in the previous scriptures (7:157) is of a descriptive nature as both the Torah and Injeel are referenced. There is no mention in verse 7:157 of a messenger called 'Ahmad'. Conversely, all the other descriptive details present in verse 7:157 are absent from verse 61:6.

In summary:

Verse 61:6

- Mentions a messenger to come after Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh)
- A name is mentioned
- Makes **no mention** of a **name** being captured by the Bible

Verse 7:157

- There is **no mention** of a **name** or a name that is captured by the Bible
- Mentions a gentile (ummi) prophet that is mentioned in the previous scriptures who enjoins good, forbids evil, makes lawful good things and provides a light of guidance which should be followed.

Therefore, to dovetail both verses into one conglomerate whole and to expect a name 'Ahmad' in the Bible is unwarranted from a Quranic perspective. The two verses are advancing two very different points in two very different contexts. On the strength of verse 7:157 alone, what the Quran is likely referencing viz a viz the Bible are clear indications of the nature of a true Prophet that should be followed and not a name.

For example, we note in the Old Testament

Numbers 12:6

"And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet (**Hebrew: Nabi**) among you, / the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream (**Hebrew: Chalown**)"

Please note the capacity of the verse dealing with future prophets and not Prophet Moses ^(pbuh) who God spoke with directly (Numbers 12:7-8).

From the Quran, there is considerable support that Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) was inspired by God's words in his dreams.

021:005 (Part)

"Nay," they say, "(These are) **Muddled dreams (Arabic: ahlam)! Nay, He has invented it! forged it! Nay, He is a poet! ...**"

The above is merely quoted as a **possible example** and is not intended to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the Biblical possibilities. However, the point of verse 7:157's expectation from the Bible should be clear which is not a reference to a particular name.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF AHMAD?

'Ahmad' simply means to praise one, to possess a praiseworthy quality, a quality for which one is praised. It also means to speak well of one, to commend one or to speak of one with official sanction.

حمد

1. حَمَدَةٌ, aor. ۛ, inf. n. حَمَدٌ (Ṣ, L, Mṣb, K) and مَحْمَدٌ and مَحْمِدٌ (L, K) and مَحْمَدَةٌ (Ṣ, L, K) and مَحْمِدَةٌ; (L, K, and so in a copy of the Ṣ;) the last of these inf. ns. [and the third also] extr.; (L;) or the last is an inf. n. and the last but one signifies “a praiseworthy quality,” or “a quality for which one is praised;” (El-Fenáree, MF;) or the last may be a simple subst.; (Ḥar p. 392;) He praised, eulogized, or commended, him; spoke well of him; mentioned him with approbation; (Akh, Ṣ, L, Mṣb;) عَلِيٌّ كَذًا

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

Given that Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) would have expressed the narrative captured in verse 61:6 in his own vernacular (Aramaic or possibly Hebrew), the original name would not have been the Arabic 'Ahmad'. As the Quran merely communicates past dialogues and translates it into the language of the Arabs, the term 'Ahmad' would have been represented in Prophet Jesus's^(pbuh) own language.

It is also possible that the original equivalent of the name 'Ahmad' was a description as opposed to a real name. This point finds some credence if one considers the suggestion that if 'Ahmad' were to represent a proper name of another Prophet to come after Jesus,^(pbuh) one would undoubtedly have expected a plethora of recorded literature to the effect. It is not implausible to expect many followers of Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) to have adopted the name for their male offspring. Many would have attempted to fulfil this prophecy and there would have been an account of false prophecies. We

have not a hint that anything of the sort occurred in Christian history. However, the absence of historical sources does not automatically constitute unequivocal proof of absence.

The usage of the preceding Arabic term 'us'muhu' (whose name will be) does nevertheless strongly imply that 'Ahmad' (or its Hebrew / Aramaic equivalent) was a proper noun.

THE TORAH ASIDE, WHY IS THE NAME 'AHMAD' NOT CAPTURED BY THE NEW TESTAMENT TODAY IF IT WAS MENTIONED BY PROPHET JESUS?

The 'Torah' and 'Injeel' that are referenced by the Quran are primarily those scriptures that were being read by the People of the Book in the Arabian Hijaz contemporaneous and **coexistent** with Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) ministry in **7th century Arabia**.

Please see related article [1] below.

For example, it is well appreciated that certain Biblical scriptures were given more emphasis and remained more prevalent in certain locales than in others.

"By the middle of the fourth century there was wide but not complete agreement on which books should be considered authoritative for Christian communities. Codex Sinaiticus, one of the two earliest collections of such books, is essential for an understanding of the content and the arrangement of the Bible, as well as the uses made of it" [2]

Similarly, Uzair as the son of God (9:30) was not (nor has ever been) a universal Jewish belief. However, the Quran often merely addressed the immediate beliefs of Jews that were encountered by the Prophet.

Moreover, the mention of giving life to clay birds, Prophet Jesus's ^(pbuh) speech as a child are only captured by the Biblical Apocrypha and **not** the canon Gospels or New Testament. However, the Quran recognises that such knowledge may have been prevalent amongst the Christians of the Arabian Hijaz contemporaneous with the Prophet and seeks to confirm it when deemed appropriate.

Therefore, it stands to reason that there is no need **to assume** that the mention of 'Ahmad' was ever captured by the Canon Gospels or wider New Testament literature. This may well have been a **belief** that was prevalent by a certain contingent of the People of the Book or present in an **Apocrypha** which is now not extant. The Quran could also be providing new information which may have not been known before as there is no reason to assume that every conversation of Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) was captured by the New Testament writers.

There also remains the possibility that due to Christian theology asserting Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) as the final saviour to mankind, that any further reference of a law bearing Prophet or messenger to the gentiles was not deemed appropriate and therefore not captured by the Christian New Testament writers.

ANALYSING THE DISPUTE

Studying both verse 61:5-6, it is not clear what disputes arose which prompted the response by Prophet Jesus.^(pbuh) That his response was advanced as part of a dispute or being vexed is highly likely given the previous verse with regards Prophet Moses^(pbuh) and the overall context.

It is quite possible to argue that a dispute with his own ministry arose whereby Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) attempted to authenticate his ministry by way of the Torah as left by Prophet Moses.^(pbuh) In much the same way he could have well advanced the 'glad tidings' of a future messenger to come after him (Ahmad) just as Prophet Moses^(pbuh) had done before by way of the Torah. The Quran captures key points and seems less inclined to capture each and every discussion in a comprehensive form. Equally, it is implausible to assume that the Bible writers captured every single conversation that Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) was ever part of.

In this manner, the debate could well have been with regards messengership in general. This would explain the possible theological question as to why Prophet Jesus^(pbuh) deemed it necessary to mention another messenger after him while the same audience was not prepared to instil faith in his own messengership.

IS 'PARAKLETOS' A CORRUPTED FORM OF 'PERIKLYTOS' (MUCH PRAISED - AHMAD)?

There is no documented proof from Biblical sources that the Biblical term 'Parakletos' (comforter) was ever a misrepresentation of the Greek 'Periklytos' (the much praised). All manuscripts predating the revelation of the Quran only refer to the term 'Parakletos' (comforter). Therefore, to assert such a corruption of the term is untenable based on evidence.

Please see related article [2] below where this assertion is disputed.

SONG OF SONGS - MACHMAD

[Also known as Song of Songs of Solomon or Song of Solomon]

Many Muslims, particularly over the past few decades have made reference to the Hebrew Bible and in particular, Song of Songs verse 5:16, to support the notion that 'Muhammad' is mentioned in the Torah.

Song of Songs 5:16

"His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely. **(Hebrew: Machmad)** This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" [3]

Machmad-im (Plural)

Quite apart from the contentions against this hypothesis and what the Hebrew "Machmad" actually refers to given the context and the somewhat romantic content, it is to be noted that on the strength of verse 61:6, Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) was not referring to the Old Testament with regards the mention of a Prophet named 'Ahmad'.

Song of Songs is not considered part of the Torah proper, which from a Quranic perspective, is a reference to those books that were revealed to Prophet Moses. ^(pbuh) The Song of Songs is part of the wider **Jewish Tanakh** and in particular, the **Ketuvim** (Writings) and not the 'Torah'.

Furthermore as already noted, the term used in Song of Solomons is 'Machmad' and not 'Ahmad'.

If 'Muhammad' (as some Muslims assert) was a reference to what Prophet Jesus ^(pbuh) referred to, then there is no reason why the name 'Muhammad' would have been not captured by verse 61:6 when the name 'Muhammad' is well known to the Quran.

It is academically unacceptable to transport a similar sounding text from one ancient scripture into another language and then to assert that they are the same term.

'Machmad' in Hebrew means a desirable or pleasant thing. We note its usage in verse 1 Kings 20:6.

1 Kings 20:6

"Yet I will send my servants unto thee to morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, *that whatsoever is pleasant (Hebrew: Machmad) in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away*" [4]

In this context, substituting Machmad with 'Muhammad' would make absolutely no sense.

It is also to be noted that the Hebrew letter used in 'MaCHmad' is '**CH**' (**Chet - Guttural Ch**) and not '**H**' (**He**). The text does not say 'MaHmad' as is sometimes incorrectly vocalised by those that propound this hypothesis. What often compounds the problem is the often incorrect transliteration of the Hebrew word which does not capture the 'Chet' in Hebrew. Furthermore, to anyone familiar with Hebrew, the reference is in an adjective form and is not understood as a proper noun.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is no conclusive warrant from the Quran that the name 'Ahmad' is to be found written in the Bible.

Therefore, a contention based on such an expectation with the charge that an absence of the name 'Ahmad' in the Bible is proof of the Quran's false authorship is academically unacceptable.

Verse 61:6 and 7:157 do not dovetail and should be understood separately given their individual contexts.

On the strength of verse 7:157 alone, what the Quran is likely referencing viz a viz the Bible are clear indications of the nature of a true Prophet such as Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) that should be followed and not a Prophet of a particular name.

There is not one verse in the Quran which categorically states that the name 'Ahmad' is written in the Bible.

Related Articles:

- (1) ['Between his Hands' or 'Before It' \(Ma Bayna Yadayhi\)](#)
- (2) [Parakletos or Periklytos?](#)
- (3) [Do Not Make Any Distinctions Between the Messengers of God](#)
- (4) [End of Prophethood - Continuation of Messengers?](#)
- (5) [Is Verse 3:81 a Reference to any Particular Messenger?](#)

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, *Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 2, Page 638*

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[2] *Codex Sinaiticus, About Codex Sinaiticus, Significance*, [online] <http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/codex/significance.aspx>
[Accessed 27th November 2011]

[3] *The Bible - The King James Version*

[4] *Ibid.*

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