

A Comparative Study of Pharaoh's Countenance in Quran and the Old Testament

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Abstract:

Among the methods which have been used by divine scriptures for propagation and cultivation of people is storytelling; those stories which have their origin in historical facts are good warning for future generations. The adventures of Pharaoh and his followers and the challenges with which Moses and other prophets were grappled in dealing with them are among the important issues addressed in Quran and the Old Testament.

Part of the life, prophetic mission and efforts of Moses is related with the tyrant Pharaoh of his time. On the other hand, in Bible Moses has been described as the savior of the Children of Israel from Pharaoh's claws.

Throughout human history there were always some people who have not spared anything of enmity, torture and troublemaking in obstructing the path of prophets and their heavenly mission. Pharaoh's story is one of the frequently recited stories in Quran; on the other hand, since Pharaoh is an essential part of the adventures of Israelites before departing Egypt his name has been numerously repeated in their sacred books.

The story of Moses, Pharaoh and the adventures of Jews has been related in Quran more than any other story; the story of Moses, Pharaoh and the adventures of the Children of Israel have been recited in 27 chapters of Quran most of which are Meccan. But in the Old Testament we encounter two Pharaohs and the basic scheme of story is drawn almost completely and in historical order in Exodus and in other books only one or two verses have been devoted to the destiny of second Pharaoh and his drowning. Of course in the New Testament there are some cursory indications of the Pharaoh of the time of Moses.

Pharaoh, according to Quran, is a pagan, mammonist and filled with moral vices. During his despotic rulership, he does not surrender to the command of God and his prophet and is continuously in war with them. Pharaoh commits all crimes against the Children of Israel and eventually gets drowned along with his army in sea while he was chasing Jews and Moses. But in the Old Testament there are two Pharaohs one of whom rules until the time Moses escapes to Madyan and the second rules during the prophecy of Moses and persecutes

and tortures the Children of Israel and becomes drowned while he was chasing Jews and Moses.

This essay is an effort to depict Pharaohs' countenance according to the verses of Quran and the Old Testament in a comparative fashion.

There are some issues which have been only addressed in Quran and some others which been dealt with only in the Old Testament. There are also some issues which are addressed by both. Moreover, there are some issues which despite the apparent similarity have discussed in slightly different ways in two books.

Shared issues: both in Quran and Old Testament no allusion has been made to the name of Pharaoh of the time of Moses. Both allude to Pharaoh's oppressive actions against the Children of Israel. Both books give the same account of the victory of Moses and his brother over Pharaoh's witches.

Shared issues with partial differences: in Quran, "Pharaoh" reminds the ruler of the time of Moses but the Old Testament insists that there were some other Pharaohs during the time of Abraham and Joseph. The Old Testament says that Pharaoh's daughter caught Moses from the Nile but Quran has another story and tells that it was Pharaoh's wife who found Moses.

Quran's exclusive issues: Quran recounts several moral vices of Pharaoh; but the Old Testament attributes fewer vices to Pharaoh as compared to Quran. Quran introduces Pharaoh as the pretender of divinity and lordship; but there is no sign of such an issue in the Old Testament. In Quran Pharaoh threatens those who do not accept his divinity by imprisonment while nothing has been said in this regard in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament's exclusive issues: Quran says nothing of the number of the Children of Israel but the Old Testament expresses their numbers. Nothing is being said of the name of the sea in which Pharaoh got drowned but the Old Testament says it was the Red Sea.

Keywords: Holy Quran, Old Testament, Moses, Pharaoh, the children of Israel.

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