

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

ARE THE ARABS AND PROPHET MUHAMMAD ^(pbuh) REALLY DESCENDANTS OF PROPHET ABRAHAM? ^(pbuh)

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THE QURANIC EVIDENCE SEEMS TO BE TO THE CONTRARY

Please find below some points to note from a Quran's perspective.

- The Quran **does not** make any claims that Prophet Ishmael ^(pbuh) was the progenitor of the Arab race, or the Prophet's forefathers. Since this is not taught by the Quran, it cannot be a belief sanctioned by the Quran.
- Quranic evidence seems to negate ties of lineage between Prophet Ishmael ^(pbuh) and the forefathers of Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh) The Quran repeatedly informs the reader, that the Prophet's forefathers were never the recipient of any guidance, or warning (32:3; 34:44; 28:46-47; 6:157; 34:42; 36:2-6; 43:20-21; 62.2). Some verses are elaborated in the sections below. This statement should be understood with the Quranic position, that Prophet Ishmael ^(pbuh) was **given scripture** (6:89) and must have at least inherited the scrolls (Suhuf), or the teachings of **Prophet Abraham** ^(pbuh) (87:18-19). If, as commonly believed, the Prophet's forefathers were tied to Prophet Ishmael ^(pbuh) by lineage, then it is a plausible question to ask why guidance was not passed down to them.
- In the Quran, the Arabs are generally referred to as 'A'rab' (urban or rural Arab dwellers), distinguished at times as tent, desert dwellers implying nomadic bedouin behaviour (badi - 33:20) and in one verse specifically identified as 'Quraish' (106:1). However, they are **never** referred to as the 'Children of Prophet Ishmael', ^(pbuh) or Prophet Abraham. ^(pbuh) **Furthermore, there is no hint of any connection in lineage.** (33:20; 48:11; 48:16; 49:14; 9:101; 9:120; 9:90;97;98-99). It is the style of the Quran to draw a clear connection of lineage, if one exists. The reader is advised to note how many times the term 'Children of Israel (Jacob)'

(Arabic: Bani Israel) is mentioned and this is an observation which simply cannot be overlooked. **There is no reference to the term 'Bani Ishmael' in the Quran.**

- Prophetic genealogy has been mentioned numerous times in the Quran. No connections have been drawn between Prophet Muhammad's^(pbuh) forefathers and those of the previous prophets.
- Another important point to note from a Quran's perspective, is that God does not guide a community exclusively based on lineage. He sends guidance to whomsoever He wills.

ARE GENEALOGIES MENTIONED IN THE QURAN?

- **Relevant genealogies are expounded in full in the Quran.** However, there is no mention of Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh) being the seed of Prophet Ishmael,^(pbuh) or any of the previous prophets apart from Adam^(pbuh) (We are all descendants of Adam^(pbuh))
- It is to be noted, that Prophet Joseph^(pbuh) informs he has followed the religion of his forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob^(pbuh) 12:38.
- Seeds or progeny's (**Arabic: Dhurriyyati**) are mentioned in 19:58.
- In 2:128, Prophet Abraham^(pbuh) refers to his seed. This could imply Prophets Isaac, Jacob^(pbuh) and others, such as Prophet Ishmael.^(pbuh) This view has support a few verses later, where Prophet Jacob^(pbuh) speaks of his forefathers in verse 2:133.
- In verse 29:27, we note the mention of the seed (**Arabic: Dhurriyyati**) of Prophets Isaac and Jacob.^(pbuh) **Again, there is no mention of Prophet Muhammad.**^(pbuh)
- In verse 57:26, the seed (**Arabic: Dhurriyyati**) of Prophets Noah and Abraham^(pbuh) are mentioned. No names of the seed are mentioned.
- However, in verses 6:83-86, the seeds of Prophet Abraham^(pbuh) are comprehensively defined and include: Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zachariya, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot.^(pbuh) **Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh) is not mentioned amongst them.**

THE QURAN ATTESTS THAT NO WARNERS NOR SCRIPTURES HAVE EVER COME TO THE FOREFATHERS OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

However, when reference is made to Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh) and his forefathers, the following maxim is reiterated by the Quran:

NO WARNERS NOR SCRIPTURES HAVE EVER COME TO THEIR PEOPLE

028:046-47

"And you were not on this side of the mountain when We called, but a mercy from your Lord that **you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you**, that they may be mindful. And were it not that there should befall them a disaster for what their hands have sent before, then they should say: Our Lord! **why did you not send to us a messenger so that we should have followed Thy communications and been of the believers!**"

032:003

"Or do they say: He has forged it? Nay! it is the truth from your Lord that you may warn a people **to whom no warner has come before you**, that they may follow the right direction"

034:044

"And We have **not given them any books which they read, nor did We send to them before you a warner**"

- Please note the argument in the next couple of verses. It is clear that no scripture ever came to the people of Prophet Muhammad, ^(pbuh) otherwise, they would have argued that they would have followed it and be better guided.

006:157

Or less you should say: **If the Book had been revealed to us, we would certainly have been better guided than they**, so indeed there has come to you clear proof from your Lord, and guidance and mercy. Who then is more unjust than he who rejects God's communications and turns away from them? We will reward those who turn away from Our communications with an evil chastisement because they turned away.

035:042

"And they swore by God with the strongest of their oaths that **if there came to them a warner they would be better guided than any of the nations**; but when a warner came to them, it increased them in nothing but aversion"

036.002-6

"I swear by the Quran full of wisdom, Most surely you are one of the messengers, On a right way. A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful. **That you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless**"

043:020-21

And they say: If the Beneficent God had pleased, we should never have worshipped them. They have no knowledge of this; they only lie. **Or have We given them a book before it so that they hold fast to it?**

- Revelation was clearly given to **Prophet Ishmael** ^(pbuh) **(6:89)**. So why has this not been passed down through his seed and inherited by Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) forefathers if the claim of lineage is true?

062:002

"It is He Who has sent amongst the gentiles a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest error"

It is also important to note, that many believers and messengers of God have spoken about their heritage from their forefathers, or their predecessors. For example, we note the people of Thamud, mentioned as successors of the people of Aad (7:72-73). We note a 'believer' within the Pharaoh's court, who reminded his people of Prophet Joseph (pbuh) in times gone by (40:34) and Prophet Joseph, (pbuh) whilst in prison, clearly indicates, that he followed the ways of his 'fathers', Prophets Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (pbuh) (12:38).

Furthermore, we note Prophet Abraham, (pbuh) who left his legacy to his sons, as did Prophet Jacob (pbuh) when he said "...Oh my sons" Surely God has chosen for you the religion and do not die except as Muslims" (2:132).

On the contrary, the Quran clearly elucidates repeatedly that no warners ever came to the predecessors of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) or his community.

THE PROPHET BEFORE REVELATION WAS NOT A READER OF ANY SCRIPTURE NOR DID HE HAVE FAITH

042:052

"And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command. You did not know (Arabic: ma kunta tadri) what the Book (Arabic: kitab) was, nor (what) the faith (was) (Arabic: la imaanu), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants; and most surely you show the way to the right path"

مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِنْ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَهْدِي بِهِ
la imaanu kitab tadri ma

Illustration - Joseph Islam

029.048

"And thou (O Muhammad) was not a reader of any scripture before it, nor did you write it with thy right hand, for then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood"

MENTION OF PROPHETS ABRAHAM, ISHMAEL ^(pbuh) AND THEIR RESPECTIVE PROGENY

- **The prayer of Prophets Abraham and Ishmael ^(pbuh)**

002.128

"Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely You are the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful"

002.129

"Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise"

- This does not exclusively (or at all) refer to the Arab race, or the people of Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh) It is also clear from verses 6:83-89, that Prophets were raised from their progeny and indeed, did receive the scripture. None of these Prophets refer to Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh)

006.83-89

"And this was Our argument which we gave to Abraham against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing. And We gave to him Isaac and Jacob; each did We guide, and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants, David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Aaron; and thus do We reward those who do good (to others). And Zachariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one (of them) was of the righteous. And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one (of them) did We prefer above (Our) creatures, With some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them unto a straight path. Such is the guidance of God wherewith He guides whom He will of His bondmen. But if they had set up (for worship) aught beside Him, (all) that they did would have been vain. These were the men to whom We gave the Book, and authority, and Prophethood: if these reject them, Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who reject them not"

029.027

"And We granted him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and caused the Prophethood and the book to remain in his seed, and We gave him his reward in this world, and in the hereafter he will most surely be among the good"

There is no mention of Prophet Ishmael's ^(pbuh) seed in the above verse. Yet, Prophethood has been firmly established through the seed of Prophet Abraham, ^(pbuh) via Prophet Isaac, ^(pbuh) Prophet Jacob, ^(pbuh) has been mentioned by name and we further know of Prophet Joseph ^(pbuh) (in verse 6:84), who also received Prophethood.

Here, a clear lineage of Prophethood is being illustrated. On the contrary, there is complete silence with regards Prophet Ishmael's ^(pbuh) seed receiving Prophethood.

- Many Prophets followed after Prophet Abraham ^(pbuh) and his sons, for example, Prophets Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, Moses and Jesus ^(pbuh). At no place does the Quran confirm, that Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) was from the seed of Prophet Ishmael, ^(pbuh) or that there was any connection in lineage. This notion, can only be found in the works of later historians and genealogists, eager to make this connection in literary works, over a century after the Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) demise. Please see: [Islamic Secondary Sources](#).

'Abikum' cannot be a confirmation of Arab or prophetic lineage, but rather, alludes to a more general statement of 'father' in faith.

- The mention of being named as 'Muslim's' 'in a bygone time', is also a clear indication that the People of the Book are also included in this narrative. **(Please see related article [1] below)**

Also from the next verse, it is clear that the nearest in 'kin or relationship' to Prophet Abraham, ^(pbuh) is one that follows him in faith. This may or may not be from the lineage of Prophet Abraham, ^(pbuh) as clearly not 'all' believers are descendants from the progeny of Prophet Abraham. ^(pbuh)

003:068

"Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham (Arabic: Awla), are those who follow him, as is this Prophet and those who believe: And God is the Protector of those who have faith"

SPIRITUAL ELECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Spiritual elective relationships such as the one cited above, (i.e. 'father' - Arabic: abikum), are not unknown in the Quran. The following verse gives another example of a spiritual elective relationship with regards 'mothers'.

033:006 (Part)

"The Prophet is closer to the believers than themselves, and his wives are (as) their mothers (Arabic: Ummahatum)..."

It would be illogical to argue, that based on the spiritual relationship cited in the above verse, that believers are therefore the descendants of the wives of the Prophet.

WHAT SOURCE GIVES US THE GENEALOGY LINKING THE ARABS TO PROPHET ISHMAEL?^(pbuh)

Islamic Secondary Sources

The earliest source is found in the work 'attributed' to Islam's earliest historian, Ibn Ishaq (died 767 CE). Note, the famous historian and editor of Ibn Ishaq's work Ibn Hisham (d.833 CE) records the genealogy, as he received it from Al-Bakkai, who in turn, received it from Ibn Ishaq. Ibn Hisham did not receive this genealogy directly from Ibn Ishaq. Ibn Hisham, died nearly 200 years after the death of the Prophet (632 CE) in 833 CE and over 65 years after the death of Ibn Ishaq himself (767 CE).

This information was received from traditionalists and 'oral narratives'

IBN HISHAM'S NOTES

"10. What I have just written about the prophet's genealogy back to Adam and about Idris and other I was told by Ziyad b. 'Abdullah al-Bakka'i on the authority of Muhammad b. Ishaq.

Khallad b. Qurra b. Khalid al-Sadusi on the authority of Shayban b. Zuhayr b. Shaqiq from Qatada b. Di'ama gave a slightly different version from Isma'il upwards, namely: Asragh-Argu-Falikh-'Abir and (later) Mahla'il b. Qayin b. Anush." [1]

Also worth noting is the 'very short' genealogy that is traced conveniently back to Adam^(pbuh) and the comments as denoted by {2} by the translator Alfred Guillaume.

MUHAMMAD'S PURE DESCENT FROM ADAM

"Abu Muhammad 'Abdu'l-Malik ibn Hisham the Grammarian said:

This is the book of the biography of the apostle of God.

Muhammad was the son of 'Abdullah, b. 'Abdu'l-Muttalib (whose name was Shayba), b. Hashim (whose name was 'Amr), b. 'Abdu Manaf (whose name was al-Mughira), b. Qusayy (whose name was Zayd), b. Khilab, b. Murra, b. Ka'b, b. Lu'ayy, b. Ghalib, b. Fihri, b. Malik, b. al-Nadr, b. Kinana, b. Khuzayma, b. Mudrika (whose name was 'Amir), b. Ilyas, b. Mudar, b. Nizar, b. Ma'add, b. 'Adnan, b. Udd (or Udad), b. Muqawwam, b. Nahur, b. Tayrah, b. Ya'rub, b. Yashjub, b. Nabit, b. Ismail, b. Ibrahim, the friend of the Compassionate, b. Tarih (who is Azar), b. Nahur, b. Sarugh, b. Ra'u, b. Falikh, b. 'Aybar, b. Shalikh, b. Arfakhshadh, b. Sam, b. Nuh, b. Lamk, b. Mattushalakh, b. Akhnukh, who is the prophet Idris according to what they allege, {2} but God knows best (he was the first of the sons of Adam to whom prophecy and writing with a pen were given), b. Yard, b. Mahlil, b. Qaynan, b. Yanish, b. Shith, b. Adam (10)" [2]

"{2} The phrase employed indicated that the writer doubts the statement. There is a saying in Arabic: 'There is a euphemism for everything and the polite way of saying "It's a lie" is "they allege" (*za 'amu*)"' [3]

The knowledge of Prophet Muhammad's^(pbuh) lineage back to Prophet Ishmael^(pbuh) was simply recorded on the authority of the claims of certain traditionalists and the claim of 'some of the people'. Early historians such as Ibn Ishaq, were simply basing their information on these oral claims.

This can be seen in the following example:

'Muhammad b. Muslim b. 'Ubaydullah b. Shihab al-Zuhri told me that 'Abdu'l-Rahman b. 'Abdullah b. Ka'b b. Malik al-Ansari, also called al-Sulami, told him that the apostle of God said: 'When you conquer Egypt treat its people well, for they can claim our protection and kinship.' I asked al-Zuhri what the apostle meant by making them our kin and he replied that Hagar, the mother of Ismail, was of their stock (13)' [4]

In Ibn Hisham's notes, we find an elaboration of the above paragraph and in particular, al-Zuhri's claim as depicted by note (13)

'13. All the Arabs are descended from Isma'il and Qahtan. Some of the people of Yaman claim that Qahtan was a son of Isma'il and so according to them Isma'il is the father of all the Arabs' [5]

The fluidity and genesis of the belief that Arabs were descendants of Prophet Ishmael^(pbuh) can be seen from the earliest reports of the historians above. The belief is not based on wide acceptance or

strong documentary evidence. Rather, it is based on the reports of 'some' people who claimed that view. Ibn Hisham, was nearly 200 years removed from Prophet Muhammad, ^(pbuh) or any of the early companions for any concrete verification.

The reliability of Al-Zuhri as a narrator is outside the remit of this article. However, those familiar with scholarship material in the area of [Islamic Secondary source literature](#), will be aware of the following letter **Laith ibn Sa'd allegedly wrote to Malik ibn Anas**, the early Jurist.

In his famous letter to Malik ibn Anas, Laith ibn Sa`d writes:

"Ibn Shihab (al-Zuhri) would give many contradicting statements, when we would meet him. While if any one of us would ask him something in writing, he, in spite of being so learned, would give three contradictory answers to the same question. He would not even be aware of what he had said about the issue in the past. This is what prompted me to give up what you do not approve of [i.e. quoting a narrative on the authority of ibn Shihab]" [6]

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is **no unequivocal supporting evidence from the Quran** that the Arabs were descendants of Prophet Abraham ^(pbuh) via Prophet Ishmael. ^(pbuh) On the contrary, it has been argued in the article that the Quran indicates otherwise.

Muslim readers who are familiar with the Darud Shareef prayer, its contents and meaning (which is recited by many in their prayer), will note, that Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) is not deemed part of the progeny of Prophet Abraham ^(pbuh) in the first part of the Darud Shareef prayer. It is plausible that this prayer captured through a consensus of early Muslims and propagated en masse via daily ritual prayers, depicts a truer reflection of the understanding of the earliest Muslims. (i.e. that Prophets Abraham and Muhammad ^(pbuh) were in fact not linked by a traceable lineage).

Please see article [2] below which takes a closer look at the 'Darud Shareef' prayer.

However, it is to be made clear **that the Darud Shareef prayer is not being cited as Quranic evidence** as this prayer remains **outside** the text of the Quran.

Most importantly, there is **no support** in the Quran for the belief that the Arabs descended from the lineage of Prophet Abraham ^(pbuh) via Prophet Ishmael. ^(pbuh)

Related Articles:

- (1) [Muslim and Mu'min \(Believer\) - The Difference](#)
- (2) [Darud Shareef Prayer](#)

REFERENCES

- [1] GUILLAUME. A, The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah, Oxford University Press, Page 691
- [2] Ibid., Page 3
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Ibid., Page 4
- [5] Ibid., Page 691
- [6] QAYYIM. I A'laam al-Muwaqqi'in, Daru'l-Jayl, Beirut, Volume 2, Page 85

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