

## A Christian's guide to the Koran, Lesson 28, Noah's drowned son and the story of Joseph

(Audio and pdf available on this website.)

Today we begin with sura 11, and we also cover 12 and 13.

Sura 11 is called "Houd." "Houd" is a character mentioned in an earlier sura who now gives his name to this one. His story is unique to Muhammad, and we will leave it alone.

Much of the terrain of the rest of this chapter is familiar, with one notable exception in verses 42ff. Here we are introduced to a curious addition to the Bible's story of Noah. You will recall that Noah had three sons, and that all three, along with Noah and all their wives, were saved on the ark. Not so in the Koran. One son, unnamed in the verses, actually got away, and drowned, in spite of the pleadings of his father to come back to the ark.

Perhaps even more damaging to the general theme of truth is the repeated notion that good works will save. To be precise, verse 114: "Surely good deeds drive away the evil deeds." Sometimes we wish so, but in God's eyes it is not going to happen. Only forgiveness can cleanse a man from sin, and that forgiveness is only available through what Jesus did on Calvary. So, both the greatest problem of all mankind, and its solution, are missing in this holy book.

Sura 12, from Mecca, is remarkable in that it is the first one so far that stays on one topic for its entirety. Its topic, and its name, is [Old Testament] Joseph. Muhammad seems to have remembered this one fairly well, but several changes do occur along the way. In the Koran version, his jealous brothers actually ask Dad to send Joseph with them on that fateful day: "O our father, why do you not trust us with Joseph?" they plead.

After their malicious deed is performed, they tell Jacob that a wolf ate him, to which he responds with incredible grace: "Yet your soul lightens the affair. So patience is beautiful, and Allah is the one who will be asked for assistance..." In the Bible, Jacob is distressed almost to the point of heart failure and total collapse. Emotion!

In Muhammad's telling, it is a chance traveler that discovers Joseph in a well, not the brothers who come and pull him out to sell for a profit to some passing merchants.

Then to Potiphar's wife. The captain of the guard is given a name change. He is now Al-'Aziz. His wife does her seducing, and lies to her husband about it, but Joseph is not immediately arrested. The town gossips get together at Mrs. Potiphar's house and wrest a confession from her, which never gets to the husband's ears.

Then Joseph goes to jail, but it is not clear why or how.

When all of the jail events have taken place, and Joseph stands before "the king", not called Pharaoh in this account, it is Joseph who suggests that he be given an administrative position in the kingdom. You will recall that in the Bible story, Joseph simply recommends that *someone* be appointed to the huge task ahead of them. We cannot tell how much Joseph knew about what he was asking, but it seems that Pharaoh's appointment shocked Joseph.

Then comes the revealing of Joseph to his visiting brothers, suddenly needy customers from a foreign country. Muhammad says that he took one brother aside and told him the truth about himself, right before the poignant Benjamin incident, where Joseph's cup is placed in his younger brother's sack.

The brothers are all sent back to tell Jacob that Benjamin has been stolen, in spite of the fact that one brother [we know him as Judah] offered to be a slave in his place. In the Koran, Joseph says, "That we should take anyone but him with whom our property was found, for then we should act unjustly." In the Bible, Judah's plea, and description of his ailing father brings Joseph to the end of the charade. He tells all.

So, the Koran continues, Jacob hears all this, and begins crying for Joseph instead of Benjamin! His other sons rebuke him for this, and eventually return to Joseph, who rebukes them for what they did. Of course, in the Bible, it just isn't so. There we see God's man, a type of Jesus Christ, freely forgiving his brothers, and bringing great peace and joy to his family.

In yet another added twist to all of this, Joseph finally tells who he is, then gives his shirt, instructing his brothers to "throw it on my father's face..." The idea being that Jacob will smell Joseph's body scent and believe the brothers' story.

The story ends per the Bible, with the exception of the fact that Joseph is said to lodge his parents in Egypt after that. In fact, one of his parents, mother Rachel, has been dead for some time. At least, that's how it is in the Bible, the book to which Muhammad has sent his listeners often, as though it were a trusted piece of literature.

So why, why, you ask? Did Muhammad simply not know this Biblical story, and all the others with which he plays so loosely regarding the facts? Was he simply embellishing and filling in those places where memory did not serve? Was it deliberate corruption of the text, to let all know that it was he, Muhammad, that now had control of history? Was this truly a spirit, as he feared from the beginning, not of God, but the Enemy? Those are the only choices that I think we have.

We know that the Islamic option, that it is true, does not fit any sense of logic, since the Old Testament Scriptures predated Muhammad's recitations by so many hundreds of years.

From Medina comes sura 13, "The Thunder". It is in verse 13 that the word is used, and is meant to strike fear in the hearts of those who listen. In this, the chapter is typically Medinan.

As to its other contents, Muhammad attempts to describe natural phenomena in terms of the power of Allah. We see the sun and the moon traveling, and the earth "spread" and kept in place by "stabilizers."

Questionable science, to be sure. But as always, more questionable theology. And I quote (verse 11): "Surely Allah will not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves." True? Or false? Have we finally found the source of that ancient quote, "God helps those who help themselves?"

Both quotes are false, from wherever they came. If we are dependent on man to make the first move, we are all lost for sure. Here is love, says the Bible, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sin." Propitiation. Atonement. Payment. Calvary. All sadly missing in Muhammad's plan of salvation.

Even in your life, and in mine, was it not God Who moved first?

One other note about this sura: Allah makes it plain several times in the Koran that he has sent down the readings in the Arabic language. Well, not quite true. There are literally hundreds of words, used multiple times, that are from either Persian, Berber, Syriac, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Ethiopian, Akkadian, Latin, Pahlavi, Abyssinian, Mesopotamian, or absolutely

unknown sources. This is distressing to the Muslim mindset, but there is no way around the facts of the case.

No, the Koran is not totally Arabic. Two vivid examples of this are the words for God (Allah) and the book of recitations themselves (Qur'an)!

Next time we begin with sura 14. Please join us.

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