

Is Solomon a legendary king or a historic one as a Prophet?

“Solomon’s” name is mentioned in The Quran and Bible. The Quran introduces Solomon as a good servant and one of the prophets who have been given knowledge and wisdom.

The word “wisdom” has been repeated 20 times in The Quran and it refers to Luqman, David, instructions of Prophet Muhammad and The Quran. The Quran considers knowledge as the basis of Solomon’s government and mentions it as the foundation of evolution and change in humane society. And talks about Solomon’s extraordinary power and excludes the scope of his country which was spreaded all over the world. However, the Israelites know Solomon as one of their kings.

Solomon’s government and his wisdom was the best among the kings that were ruling in the Jerusalem. Some parts of Old Testament such as book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Solomon and Songs of Songs are related to Solomon. One of the humans’ desires is to create legend. The sense of hero worshiping has led people to create myths about national or religious heroes. Moreover, the presence of distortions about great historical characters are a result of this desire. The legend is a story that justifies interference of extraordinary powers in normal and humanistic issues. In the legend, the subjective world combines with objective ones. Time is not a matter and a human being shows subjective powers. The man of the legend is not like ordinary human being and he is not part of the history. (1)

When human beings could not discover the secrets of the world, they used legend to explain the reason of incidents. They got help from their imagination to do so. The legends had different aspects. The most important aspect of a legend is to cultivate perfection and moral virtues. Legends were both

constructive and destructive. In fact, they constructed the souls of human by virtues and destroyed the mind of a human being when he wanted to explain the reason that is laying behind incidents.

Legend was common all over the world. What we call legend today was considered a fact in its right time and place. From scientific view, philosophy and religion are created by legend.² but religious people reject this point of view about religion. Greek Philosophers used legends widely to express their thoughts. (2)

Solomon was the topic of the legends in the east. With the advent of Islam in Iran, the Iranian legends were combined with Semitic ones. One of these combinations appears in some legends which are about Solomon and Jamshid who was a legendary king in Iran...

In post Islam centuries, Jamshid and Solomon, were considered one person. According to Iranian stories, Fars that was the capital of legendary Jamshid, was considered Solomon's capital and the kings of Persia were considered Solomon's deputy and heirs to the throne of Solomon.

Even the grave of Cyrus the Great was named the grave of Solomon's mother. About grave of Solomon's mother or grave of Cyrus the Great, it is said that their graves are hidden on the ceiling of their mausoleum. (3) Ibn al-Muqaffa is one of the persons who rejected the idea that Jamshid and Solomon were one person. (4)

According to Iranian national stories, Jamshid or Jam is a legendary character and is one of the greatest kings of the Pishdadian dynasty in Iran. . He reigned for 650 years and there were no sicknesses and death in his kingdom territory for 300 years.

When Jamshid did bad things and became a dishonest man, he lost his power and his kingdom was ruined. (5) Eventually, Jamshid went astray, he became arrogant and he was ruling tyrannically. Therefore, people overthrew his monarchy with the help of Zahhak. Jamshid escaped from his enemies for 100 years. Eventually, they found him near China Sea and killed him by cutting him into half by a saw.

In the Persian literature, the cup of Jamshid is attributed to Solomon and the seal of Solomon is attributed to jam. The fame of Solomon in Abrahamic religions is because his name is mentioned in Bible and The Quran. Solomon is recalled a lot in The Quran and Bible and the history of his life is mentioned there. He is praised a lot in both of these holy books. However, some parts of the Solomon's pure life are distorted in the bible.

Criticisms that are made to Bible show that, this book is written by a human being and original Bible was distorted, so there are wrong things in it. Commentators of The Quran bring beneficial articles about Solomon for the verses in The Quran which are about Solomon. Allameh Balaghi mentions these issues in his book which is named Al-huda ela din al-Mustafa.

While The Quran approves causality, it says about some phenomena which are not possible by typical issues which exist in cause and effect philosophy. In fact, abnormal and extraordinary factors cause them. These phenomena are the miracles which are attributed to some prophets including Solomon. These issues (miracles) are not impossible by themselves and wisdom does not recognize them as impossible things but the difference between normal events and miracles is in the way they affect people. In fact, normal events affect people in normal trends but in miracles, impression is fast and instantaneous. By comparing what we read about Prophet Solomon in The Quran and the

Bible, it is easier to know Israelites. By taking a comparative look at the mutual characters that are mentioned both in The Quran and Bible, some hidden points about them will be cleared and legendary looks about these historical people will be wiped out.

Regarding this, Allame Tabatabayi has written: There are many narrations in this field, some of them are quoted from Ibn Abbas and Ibn Abbas himself says that he has quoted them from Kaab Al-Ahbar. In the story of prophet Solomon (PBUH), there are some articles that are beyond dignity of prophets of God and it clear that these articles are fabricated by some people intentionally. (6)

Regarding this, Allame Sherani has written: In the interpretations of the verses that are revealed in The Quran about Prophet Solomon's story, there are no reliable narrations to rely on. Some of them are certainly incorrect and for some of them we have no evidence that proves they are correct. And are against what is mentioned in The Quran and we cannot rely on them. In the sacred books of Jews, there are some unfair sayings about Solomon. Abu Hurairah's narrations about Solomon are not reliable too and we cannot trust them. (7)

Etymology of "Solomon" name

The name of Prophet Solomon is mentioned in 7 Chapters of The Quran and in 17 verses of The Quran, and there are 47 verses about Prophet Solomon in The Quran. There are two points of views about words of The Quran.

1. The viewpoint of people who assume all Quranic words are Arabic. (8)
- These people believe that if somebody thinks that there are non-Arabic words in The Quran he has accused God wrongly. These people refer to those verses of The Quran that reads: "We have made it a Quran in Arabic". (43-3) Shafi'i

has written: The Quran itself is a proof that there is no book from God except in Arabic. (9)

2. The view point of people who consider the presence of non-Arabic words such as: Sejjil, Al-meshkat, Al-yam, Al-Tur, Abariq and Estabraq in The Quran, as a proof of the existence of some non-Arabic words in The Quran. (10)

To conclude, this it can be said that non-Arabic words can be considered as Arabic after they are used in Arabic language even if they are non-Arabic in essence. (11) The name of all prophets that are mentioned in The Quran like Abraham, Ishmael, Isaak, Elijah, Idris, Jacob are non-Arabic. Only the names of four of them are Arabic i.e. Adam, Saleh, Shuaib and Muhammad (PBUH). (12)

Some groups of etymologists believe that “Solomon” is an Arabic word. According to them “Solomon” is diminutive of the word “Salman” and it is derived from the root word “Selm”. (13) Some orientalists such as Lagarde and Lidzbarski, believe that the etymologists who believe Solomon is diminutive of Salman are right. Lagarde uses the words “Zoayferan” and “Zafaran” as an example to prove his claim.

The word “Solomon” has been used in Arab poems since past: one of these poems reads: “Don’t compare Salman’s dignity (Salman is name of one of companions of Prophet Muhammad) to Solomon’s dignity when you know Solomon is diminutive of Salman”. Some terminologists say Solomon is non-Arabic and it was brought to Arabic language. Abu Mansur Javaliqi knows it as foriegn Word and Hebrew.(14)

Some say that the word Solomon has been entered to Arabic language from Syriac language. Because the letter “N” in Solomon shows that it is a Syriac, Greek and Ethiopian word while there is no “N” in Hebrew for Solomon, so this

a reason to prove this idea that this word is entered to Arabic language from Christian culture and Syriac language. (15) Mosaheb realizes that the word “Solomon” is originally a Hebrew name which refers to a man and some European scientists have mentioned its equivalent. (16)

Genealogy of Solomon (PBUH)

The social and intellectual environment of Prophet David and Solomon was completely different from others. These differences had led them to form a divine government to fulfill their monotheistic goals. The Quran reminds of Prophet Solomon as the son and heir of Prophet David and mentions “To David we gave Solomon” (chapter 38- verse 30), “And Solomon was David’s heir” (chapter 27- verse 19). Solomon is David’s heir and God has given many precious blessings to David. David story is narrated respectfully in The Quran. In some interpretations of The Quran, there are some narrations about Prophet David and the wife of Uriah which are originated from Old Testament. Regarding this Allameh Tabatabayi has written: “This story has been taken from Torah except that Torah has mentioned it more hideously while it is more moderate in Islamic quotations.” (17) Following this, Allameh quotes from Oyun Akhbar Al-Reza that: It was asked from Imam Reza (PBUH) that what the story of Prophet David (PBUH) with Uriah was and Imam Reza answered: “In the period of Prophet David if a wife’s husband was died or killed in a war, she was not allowed to marry another man any more. The first time that God made it possible was for David and God let him to marry the wife of Uriah who was killed.

David married Uriah's wife after Eddeh (a waiting period during which a woman cannot remarry another man) period was passed. It was difficult for people to bear it." (18)

The prominent characters of the Bible are classified into different groups. In Judaism each of these groups have different functionality. These characters can be classified into 5 major groups, while some of them can be classified in several groups. Abaa (Prophets) like Ibrahim, Isaac and Jacob. Prophets like Moses and Aaron. Kings like Solomon and David. Arbitrators like Samuel, and priests like Eeli.

The Old Testament recognizes Solomon as the son of David: "And now there will be a son for you who will be a calm man, because I will give peace to him from all his enemies and his name will be Solomon and during his life I will give Israel health and comfort" (19), "And when David was old, he appointed his son, Solomon, as the king of the Israel". (20)

In addition, the Old Testament reminds of Solomon as another title and that is the "Son of God": "David told Solomon: ...The Words of God has been revealed to me: ... There will be a son for you who is a calm man... His name will be Solomon... He will be my son and I will be his father." (21) And God told me: "Your son, Solomon, it is him who will build my house and my yards. Because I selected him to be my son and I will be his father." (22) "I will be the father for him and he will be the son for me and if he commits a sin I will punish him with the stick and whip of the people. (23) (I make people to bother him to be punished)

"Son of God" is a ritual nickname which is given to the prophets and the faithful people in different religions. In the New Testament the phrase "Son of God" is used for Prophet Jesus (PBUH) and his believers. (24) In The Quran we read:

(Both) the Jews and the Christians say: “We are sons of Allah, and his beloved”.
(Chapter 5- verse 18)

Islam accepts some ritual phrases such as “Hand of God”, “the Family of God”, and “the House of God”. (25) But because the nickname “son of God” was effective in the deviation of Christians, the usage of this nickname has been forbidden. So, the prohibition of the word has a secondary title like the prohibition of the sentence: Raena, (say not words of ambiguous import).
(Chapter 1 of The Quran. Verse 26)

Judaism believed that Jesus should be from the generation of the David who will bring back his dominance. (27) In this regard, Matthew in his Gospel mentions Jesus is one of the descendants of David and Solomon. He has tried to prove that Jesus has inherited the power of David and Solomon. “Jesse was David’s father. David was Solomon’s father and his mother was Uriah’s wife. And Solomon was Rehobaam’s father” (28). Regarding the wife of Uriah there is a story in the 11th chapter of the second book of Samuel which is invalid and inappropriate from our point of view, because it includes disrespect to Prophet David and Solomon. We will quote the summary of the story with pity and bitterness as follows:

On an evening in spring when David went on the roof of his castle, he saw a woman who was bathing. After investigating about her, he found out that the woman is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah who is one of his commanders. In that period, Uriah was in war. David ordered to bring that woman to him. And after that he slept with that woman. The woman went back to her house and informed David that she is pregnant.

In a plot to pretend that Bathsheba was pregnant from his own husband, David ordered the commander of his army, Joab, to send Uriah to him. When Uriah

came back, David asked him to go home and take some rest. David intended that Uriah sleep with his wife and incoming baby be deemed to be Uriah's child. But Uriah refused to go home and slept together with other guards of the king... The next day, David asked Uriah "why didn't you go back home?" Uriah answered: "Now that, the soldiers and the army of the Israelites and its commanders are camping in the desert and Ark of the Covenant is with them, is it right that I go home and enjoy myself besides my wife and sleep with her? I swear to you I will never do that". Then, David told Uriah: "stay here today too and I will let you go tomorrow."

Then, in an attempt to seduce Uriah to go home and do what was intended, , David invited Uriah to a party and drank him wine to make him drunk so maybe he will do what David intended. But Uriah did not go back to his house again and slept together with the guards of the king. The next day, David wrote a letter to Joab, commander of Uriah, and asked Uriah to give it to Joab. In the letter it was written when the battle gets tough, leave Uriah in the front line and let him die.

The commander did so and Uriah was killed. When Bathsheba heard that her husband was killed, she mourned for him with respect to the rules of Judaism. David brought Bathsheba to the castle after her mourning was over and she became one of David's wives. After this dreadful story, Bible suffices to say what David did was dissatisfactory to God. (29)

Justification of People of the Book

People of the Book have tried to justify the sins that are attributed to prophets in their distorted books.

In Jewish interpretations the innocence of the prophets is more of a moral necessity rather than verbal necessity. Most of Jewish scholars in their interpretations writings have defended the sins of David and have tried to justify them. Regarding Prophet David (PBUH) they have referred to this statement: “David was rational in all his behaviors and God was with him all the time”. (30)

Jewish scholars have said: In Second Book of Samuel God says: “Why did you ignore the word of God and did a bad thing in his presence” to reproach David. But in its Hebrew manuscripts this statement is mentioned in a way that means: “You were about to do this bad thing”. However in other parts of Old Testament this statement is more direct about the people. From Jewish interpreter’s point of view, it was Uriah’s right to be killed just because he disobeyed Prophet David (31) and David was criticized because he killed Uriah without trial. On the other hand, the people who were sent to the war by David’s family used to divorce their wives before they go to war. This topic comes from a Hebrew word “Aruba”.

In Judaism, “Aruba” is dowry or a gift which is given to a divorced woman. These divorces were gotten secretly so nobody could take advantage of it. These women could marry if their husband was disappeared. Considering this divorce, David has done a query regarding Bathsheba. (32) As priests say if somebody wants to fornicate, he won’t ask about the woman’s family. The interpreter of the second book of Samuel (9:11) says the reason that Uriah did not go back home was that he did not want to divorce his wife for the second time.

As mentioned in Talmud and other Jewish interpretations, the murder of Uriah is justifiable, because Uriah disobeyed David and did not go back home telling that Joab is the commander not David and he takes orders from Jaob. So, he

should have been executed for his disobedience. It seems that the only mistake that David made, was that he prepared the condition for Uriah to be murdered in a war instead of having a trial for his execution. The best reason for David's innocence is because the extension of his kingdom was the result of his marriage to Bathsheba.

Irnabel is one of Sephardi Jews (33). Irnabel says David committed five major sins:

He had illegal sexual relationship with another man's wife

He tried to pretend that his own expected child from Bathsheba is Uriah's child.

He made Uriah and his companions to be killed. ,

He prevented Uriah from having the honor of dying in his own land and among his people

He married Bathsheba right after her Eddeh (a waiting period during which a woman cannot remarry another man)

He adds: "Only his pure repentance led to the mercy of God." Based on this, the Bible let us conclude that David had illegal sexual relationship and committed murder, but God forgave him after his pure repentance. So, Bible shows that the worst sins can be forgiven by pure repentance. (34)

The prophecy of Solomon (PBUH)

The Quran identifies appointment of the prophets to prophecy as a continuous event in history. The endorsement to their claim in prophecy is that God has sent them inspiration. Prophet Solomon (PBUH) also enjoyed this blessing. If someone denies that inspirations were sent to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in

fact he has denied sending inspirations to other prophets. The Quran has raised Prophet Solomon and considers him as a righteous servant of God and also one of the Prophets to whom knowledge and wisdom has been given.

The Quran has also addressed the blessing of sending inspirations to Prophet Muhammad and the prophets before him and also ranked Prophet Solomon among other prophets of God and says: “We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms.” (chapter 4- verse 163)

Moreover, The Quran recalls prophets like Ibrahim, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Job, Josef, Moses, Aaron, Zechariah, Yahiya, Jesus, Elijah, Ismael, Elisha, Lot as guided, righteous and benefactor people and ranks Prophet Solomon among them and says: “We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) guided: and before him, We guided Noah, and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron: thus do We reward those who do good” (chapter 6 – verses 84-86)

Using this verse of The Quran, Allameh Tabatabayi has realized that Solomon is from Noah’s progeny and generation and has written: Apparently, the pronoun in the word “progeny” refers to Noah because in one hand, the closest pronoun in the sentence refers to Noah and on the other hand, in the verse, some other prophets are named who are not from Abraham’s generation. People of the Book, know Prophet Solomon as a famous king of Israelites. The Bible does not speak about the prophecy of Solomon. The prophecy of Solomon has been mentioned in the book of “Proverbs of Solomon”.

The kingdom of Prophet Solomon

“And before Solomon were marshalled his hosts, of Jins and men and birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks.” (chapter 27- verse 17) The Quran is speaking about birds and animals which Solomon had Subjected them. The issue of subjection and influence on the animals is also possible for the people other than prophets. Some of the interpreters say the 17th verse of Surah Naml in The Quran refers to the point that all human beings, Jinns, and birds were in the army of Prophet Solomon and he was the owner of all creatures on earth and in his era, the birds were wise and duty-bound. Though it might not be the case in our era. Because if birds had not wisdom, it was not right to subject a duty or a task to them. This statement is clear and there is no need to bring further reasoning. (35)

Martyr Motahari has written: Despite the popular assumption, the territory of Prophet Solomon was not large and it included only the Palestine region. What The Quran mentions is the wonderful power of Solomon, not the scope of his country. . Even he did not have knowledge about the other regions of the earth. For instance he did not know what is happening in Yemen. (36)

There is no doubt that the wisdom and kingdom of Solomon excelled all kings that were ruling in the Jerusalem region. The kingdom of Israelites in the era of David was empowered, and after David, Solomon used what his father had achieved. The advantage of Solomon’s government was peace and success. The explanation of this era has been summarized in the books of 1Kings and 2Chronicles. In the Hebrew Old Testament (Tanakh), the first and second book of the Kings were one book. The translators divided the translation of Septuagint into two parts. These two books cover the 400 years (600 – 1000

BC) and the kingdom of Solomon, disintegration of the kingdom, the history of two parallel powers and the history of Judaism in captivity. (37)

The author mentions the existing historical books in his period such as Solomon Events, Chronicles of Israeli Kings and the Chronicles of Jewish Kings. He also refers to the annual reports of the country. According to a Jewish narration, the author of the book Kings is Jeremiah. But, the true author is not clear.

According to Old Testament, Solomon didn't inherit the kingdom of his father, David, without opposition. Solomon, the son of Bathsheba (The former wife of Uriah), was selected by David to be his successor and God confirmed it. (38) Adonijah, was the 4th son of David and wanted to be his successor. (39) While David was dying and before Solomon be elected as the king, Adonijah plotted to seize the power from Solomon but his conspiracy was terminated by Nathan the prophet.

But Adonijah was insistent on taking the power. And Solomon removed all the people who conspired against him. Adonijah, son of David, was thinking about seizing the power from father ambitiously. Adonijah was older than Solomon. Adonijah was supported by Joab and by inviting him to Jerusalem he wanted to become the king. But the priest Sadoog appointed Solomon as the king and after that, his kingdom was empowered day by day.

“And if Solomon is persistent in doing my rules, I will empower his kingdom forever”. (40) Solomon ruled for 40 years from 931 to 971 B.C. (41) It seems, 40 is just a rounded number to indicate a generation. The number 40 has been used many times in Bible. (42)

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21. 1 Chronicle 22: 7-10
22. 1 Chronicle, 28:6
23. 2 Samuel 7:14
24. Act of the Apostle 9:3-21; Matthew 5:44-45; John 1:12, 3:16-17
25. This interpretation comes in Imam Hossein’s pray in Rajab
26. “Raa” (رَا) in Hebrew means a person who does bad things.

27. Isaiah 11: 1-9
28. Matthew 1: 1-17
29. 2 Samuel 11: 27
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31. 2 Samuel 11:11
32. Books of Samuel 11: 3
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