

WOMAN'S STATUS IN THE CREATION NARRATIVES IN THE *QUR'ĀN* AND TORAH

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ABSTRACT

Women have played various roles in all cultures throughout time. However, the Qur'ān and Torah have explicated the specific role of women in their creation narratives. In particular, the story of Adam and Eve's creation and their fall from grace after consuming the fruit from the Forbidden Tree are depicted in both holy books. There are some resemblances in this story between the Qur'ān and Torah, but some significant differences as well. For instance, the Torah considers that Eve was created from Adam and seduced him to eat from the tree, thereby taking chief responsibility. However, the Qur'ān states that God has created man and woman from a single soul (person) in order that they dwell in love, placing equal blame on both. Moreover, the Qur'ān notes that they repented from their sin and God forgave them. Due to the Torah's significantly more biased perspective,

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this has had a negative influence on some important social and religious values in Western civilization for nearly two thousand years. This comparative study can offer an essential perspective for redefining women's dignity in the West and the superiority of the Quranic approach.

Keywords: *women's status, Eve, Qur'an, Torah, Old Testament*

INTRODUCTION

Women, comprising almost half of the human population, can and have had important and remarkable roles in the progress of civilization. Obviously, the quality and quantity of these roles depends on their position in society. The views of Abrahamic religions have always been crucial in justifying the status of women in many societies. Throughout the centuries, the occupations of wife and mother have been the primary vehicles of religious expression and duty for pious women. Thus, the vast majority of women in most cultures have been driven by these roles. The examination of the teachings of *Qur'an* and the Torah can clarify the root of many contemporary social issues, especially regarding gender differences and interactions, is the reversal off the traditional system that has become the origin of so many disagreements.

This article will examine and compare women's position in creation from the perspectives of the *Qur'an* and Torah. The story of Adam and Eve and the eating from the Forbidden Tree have been narrated in both the *Qur'an* and Torah. There are similarities in each version of the story in these holy books, but there are also some important differences that have become the root of significant disagreements between Islam and Judaism regarding the status of women.

WOMEN'S POSITION IN JUDAISM

Judaism has been in existence for over 3000 years⁴ and is considered one of the oldest religions which has its own law (Shariah) and specific instructions

⁴ According to the Jewish calendar based on documentation of the Hebrew Bible, about 3320 years (until the year 2016 and in Hebrew year 5776) have passed from the migration of the Israelites from Egypt. Hamami Lalezar, Younes (The Jewish Clergy and Thinker, Tehran Jewish Committee, Tehran, Iran), in interview with author on 21 September 2012.

on various affairs of life.⁵ Nevertheless, the position of the Jewish woman is not easily defined in Judaic teachings. In traditional Judaism, like other Abrahamic religions, the primary role of a woman is as wife, mother, and keeper of the household. So, throughout the centuries, the occupations as wife and mother have been the primary mediums of devout religious expression for Jewish women. Also, their scriptures give a high degree of honour to faithful and God-fearing women. The Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh*,⁶ has mentioned these outstanding women that enable us to distinguish and find out the divine paradigm by considering and reflecting on their attributes. In addition, the Talmud has pointed out that there have even been female prophets although. These Israelite prophetesses are seven: Sarah (Abraham's wife, called "Mother of Israel" and mother of Isaac), Miriam (daughter of Emran [or Emram] and sister of Moses and Aaron), Deborah (wife of Lapidot), Anne (mother of the prophet Samoel), Abigail (David's wife), Hulda (wife of the prophet Shalom), and Esther (Jewish queen of Iran, wife of Xerxes [Khashayar Shah])

1. Women's Position in the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible)

The *Tanakh*, by mentioning various stories, expresses contradictory notions about the creation and position of women. For instance, in the chapter of Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve notes that the latter instigated the former towards disobedience - eating the forbidden fruit.⁷ This story has been effective in weakening and subordinating women because the duty of women in the story of Genesis is to give birth and obey men. Also in some Jewish commentaries being modest and wearing modest dress⁸ are also necessary conditions of woman's personality.

⁵ Marans, Noam, 'An Introduction to Judaism for Catholic Students,' in *About Judaism; A Guide to Beliefs and Practices* (USA: Massachusetts, South Deerfield, 1989).

⁶ Christians call it the Old Testament and profess belief to it. The Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh/Mikra* is the collection of holy books of Jewish people. The term of *Tanakh* is an acronym derived from the names of the three divisions of the Hebrew scripture: Torah (Instruction, or Law-also called the Pentateuch), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). See J. Coert Rylaarsdam, *Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 12 (2009): 33, accessed from <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1785796/Tanakh>, on 4 August 2014.

⁷ Torah, Genesis 3: 1-14, 16-23.

⁸ Bronner, Leila Leah, 'To Cover or Not to Cover: That is the Question Jewish, Hair Laws, Through the Ages,' <http://www.bibleandjewishstudies.net/articles/haircovering.htm>, accessed on 1 April 2013.

Regardless, this position of woman has led many Jews to read three blessing prayers everyday: “Blessed is God who created me a Jewish and not a woman and illiterate and ignorant.”⁹

These three blessings have been commonly referred to as the blessings of not being a “non-Jew, slave and woman” by their collective content, but have also been called “the negative blessings”.¹⁰ In fact, these statements - implying that it is unfortunate to be a non-Jew, a slave, or a woman - have also been considered as being negative blessings in the sense that their content implies disdainfulness and haughtiness towards other groups.¹¹

Despite these Judaic teachings, a woman can achieve merit and perfection by observing modesty, housekeeping, and encouraging the husband and her children to learn the Torah.¹² Moreover, those women learned in the Torah occupy the social services in the Israelite tribe. While there are these less humiliating positions towards woman in Judaic teachings, we can see pious advisers and arbitrators among women in Israelite prophet era. The importance of these women has not been understated; it was even mentioned that the leaders of tribes are in a lesser position compared to women prophets. However, women are considered as fulfilling different roles and following different religious commands, or Mitzvahs (duties), in comparison to men and are exempt from doing some things, however they may be rewarded if they wish to do that which they are exempted from.¹³

In explaining the story of Adam and Eve, the Torah clearly states that the first one who sinned was Eve and right after she seduced Adam to eat from the Forbidden Tree. Thus, Eve and all women after her are considered blameworthy and should be punished.¹⁴ However, in *Qur’ān*, Eve is not said to have tempted Adam to eat from the tree and Satan (Iblis) is credited for having tricked the both of them equally.¹⁵ Moreover, equal blame is given to both.

⁹ Talmud, Monahut, 43B.

¹⁰ Zevin, Shlomo Josef. “*Encyclopedia Talmudit*.” Jerusalem, Yad Harav Herzog 4 (1965): 371.

¹¹ Tabory, Joseph, ‘The Benedictions of Self-Identity and the Changing Status of Women and of Orthodoxy,’ *Kenishta: Studies of the Synagogue World*, 1 (2001): 107-38.

¹² Plaskow, Judith, ‘Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective,’ *San Francisco*, 123 (1990): 127.

¹³ Tabory, Joseph, ‘The Benedictions of Self-Identity and the Changing Status of Women and of Orthodoxy,’ 107-38.

¹⁴ Torah, Genesis 3: 1-14, 16-23.

¹⁵ Surah al-A‘rāf: 20, 22, Surah Ṭāhā: 122.

Also, the Torah states that pregnancy and birth are punishments imposed on women for the sins of Eve, and this is agreed upon by Jewish Rabbis. However, there is no specified punishment for women in Quranic context. In addition, the *Qur'ān* states that Adam and Eve repented and God forgave them, and their only punishment was to be exiled to earth.¹⁶

2. Sin of Eve in Torah

The chapter of Genesis in the Torah narrates out story of Adam and Eve's sin and its consequences:

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." ¹⁷

About Eve's sin specifically the Torah states:

"...she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. ...And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me? she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ... To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat of it, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." ¹⁸

As such, Eve has been explicitly given primary responsibility for disobeying God in this event. Moreover, in this statement of the Torah, God considers the particular punishments for Eve and collectively punishes all women thereafter.

¹⁶ Surah *Tāhā*, 20: 114-123.

¹⁷ Torah, Genesis 2:15-18

¹⁸ Torah, Genesis 3:1-14, 16-23.

3. The Consequences of Adam and Eve's Sin in Torah

Eating from the Forbidden Tree had two consequences: toil and death. First, God forbid eating from the tree, and as a result of disobeying Him, death would be the consequence.¹⁹ Also, after the sin was committed, both their lives became much more difficult they were expelled from the garden where they had lived comfortably in blessings. As a result, they had to live on earth and eat the plants of the field and animals through their own labor.²⁰

4. Extra Punishments for Eve

The Torah states about Eve's punishment:

"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing with pain you will give birth to children... Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Eve's punishment has been studied in the dicta of the Rabbis at length.²¹ What was effective in weakening and subordinating women was narrating this event throughout the history of Judaism and Christianity (because Christians consider the Torah as a part of their holy book). In fact, in the *Talmud*,²² the rabbis view Eve as a symbol and exemplar of all women and femininity in general,²³ attempting to explain gender differences through the portrayal of Eve's supposedly poor character.²⁴

¹⁹ Genesis 2: 17: "when you eat of it you will surely die."

²⁰ Genesis 3: 16-23.

²¹ Kadari, Tamar, 'Eve: Midrash and Aggadah,' *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia: Jewish Women's Archive*, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eve-midrash-and-aggadah>, accessed 20 March 2009.

²² *Talmud* (Hebrew: תַּלְמוּד): "The Talmud is the collection of ancient rabbinic literature on Jewish law and tradition (including the *Mishna* and the *Gemara*). The Talmud is an old scholastic term of the *Tannaim*. Terminologically, it is a noun from the Hebrew verb "*limmed*" (to teach) and it means "teaching". Originally, the Talmud was written in Aramaic and Tannaitic Hebrew. It is also traditionally called as Shas (ש"ס). A Hebrew abbreviation of "shisha sederim"; the "six orders" of the "Oral Law" of Judaism. It is made of 63 tractates Jewish. 'Jewish Encyclopedia The unedited full-text of the 1906,' <http://www.JewishEncyclopedia.com>. ©2002-2011, accessed on 4 January 2014.

²³ ARN, B.Ber.51a, ARN is acronym of: Avot de-Rabbi Nathan (Hebrew: אבות דרבי נתן). Usually printed together with the minor tractates of the Talmud, is a Jewish haggadic work probably compiled in the geonic era (c.700-900 CE).

²⁴ Abdel Azeem, Sheriff, *Women in Islam Versus Women in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition: The Myth & the Reality* (Cairo, Egypt: El-falah Publisher, International Islamic Publishing House Antoinette Clark Wire, 1994), 6.

As such, the chapter of Genesis has been subject to a number of interpretations, none of which may be considered satisfactory to the modern mind. Though the intent of the story is clear, as a narrative it lacks sense.²⁵ Generally, these explanations of Eve's sin offer fundamental reasons for what leads humans to sin, but the use of Eve's character as a paradigm for human wrongdoing has limited personal guilt - especially in men. To sum up, the Judeo-Christian conception of women has been poisoned by the belief that the sinful nature of Eve and her female offspring is far worse or more potent than men.²⁶ Even though the Talmud states that righteous women "were not included in the decree upon Eve," it is difficult to reconcile why the "punishments" pregnancy and childbirth still apply to them.²⁷

As such, it should not be surprising that the daily morning prayer every Jewish man recites is "Blessed be God King of the universe that Thou has not made me a woman", whereas women thank God every morning for "making me according to Thy will."²⁸ Another prayer relevant to this and found in many Jewish prayer books is: "Praised be God that he has not created me a gentile. Praised be God that he has not created me a woman. Praised be God that he has not created me an ignoramus."²⁹

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

In the pre-Islamic period in Arabia, like most ancient civilizations, women were considered as abject creatures and deprived from most of the rights of men. However, at the advent of Islam, women were granted their rights in the legal, social, economic, and spiritual spheres. Islam equalized public rights between woman and man such as right to life, education, and choosing a spouse. Islamic laws held various views about women in comparison to other cultures and religions:³⁰

²⁵ Witcombe, L. C. E., Christopher, *Eve and the Identity of Women* (Sweet Briar College, 2000).

²⁶ Abdel Azeem, Sheriff, *Women in Islam Versus Women in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition: The Myth & the Reality*.

²⁷ Talmud, BT Sotah 12a.

²⁸ Women and Mitzvot, Setting the foundation for Jewish family life. Laws of Daily Living Class #3, based on the research of Rabbi Dov Lev, © 2007 JewishPathways.com, http://jewishpathways.com/files/Women_and_Mitzvot_0.pdf, accessed on 19 June 2016.

²⁹ Eliezer Segal, 'Who Has Naot Made Me a Woman,' <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/who-has-not-made-me-a-woman/>, accessed on 19 June 2016.

³⁰ Bukhari, Syed Abdul Ghaffar, 'Role of Women in the Development of Islamic Civilization,' *Jihat al-Islam*, 5/2 (2012).

1. The Position of Woman in the *Qur'ān*

The status of woman in creation is a theologically fundamental issue and has influence on her position in every perspective.³¹ In fact, the view of man's superiority over women mostly relies on the belief that the latter was created from and for the former.

2. The Position of Woman in the Origin of Creation

Generally, the *Qur'ān* mentions Eve in three verses without mentioning her name and qualities. The *Qur'ān* states that God had created man and woman from a single soul (person)³² with similar natures in order that they dwell in love.³³ Some scholars like Riffat Hassan analyses the Quranic descriptions of human creation as displaying neutrality and illustrating a single source for man and woman. So, they believe that unlike Judeo-Christian teachings, Eve was not created from Adam's rib and this story was a fabrication introduced later into early Islamic tradition.³⁴

3. The Equal Responsibility of Adam and Eve in their Sin

The creation story of Adam and Eve, and Satan's tempting them to eat the Forbidden Fruit is stated primarily in three chapters of the *Qur'ān* (al-Baqarah, A'rāf and Tāhā) in detail:

وَبِتَّادِمُ أَسْكَنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجِكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَاكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ
فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوَسَّوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا

³¹ Hassan, Riffat, 'Equal Before Allah? Women-Men Equality in Islamic Tradition,' *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, 17/2 (1987): 2-20.

³² Surah al-Nisā', 4: 1.

³³ Surah al-A'rāf, 7: 189.

³⁴ In this context, she has brought six important *aḥādīth* and compared and analyzed them with the *Qur'ān*, considering them to be weak with regards to their formal aspect (i.e. with reference to their *isnad* and opposing view to the *Qur'ān*). Since all Muslim scholars agree on the principle that any *ḥādīth* which is in contradiction to the *Qur'ān* cannot be accepted as authentic, the above-mentioned *aḥādīth* ought to be rejected on material grounds. Hassan, Riffat, 'Equal Before Allah? Women-Men Equality in Islamic Tradition.' Also see; Al-Ghannoushi, Rashid, *al-Mar'a bayna al Qur'ān wa Wāqī' al-Muslimīn* (London: Maghreb Centre for Research and Translation, 2000), 15. See: Wadud, Amina, *Quran and Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 47.

مِنْ سَوْءَ تَيْهَمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنِ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ
 تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلَّهُمَا
 بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ
 الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنِ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلَّ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ
 لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا
 لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ أَهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي
 الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

And “O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat from wherever you will but do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers. But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from them of their private parts. He said, “Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal. And he swore [by Allah] to them, “Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors. So he made them fall, through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And their Lord called to them, “Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you that Satan is to you a clear enemy? They said, “Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers. [Allah said, “Descend, being to one another enemies. And for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time.”

(Surah al-A'raf, 7: 19-24)

Throughout the *Qur'an*, Eve is not blamed even once for the temptation of Adam. Both of them share responsibility and take equal fault:

فَوَسَّسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْءَ تَيْهَمَا وَقَالَ مَا
 نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنِ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلَّهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ

“But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from them of their private parts. He said, ‘Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal.. and he swore [by Allah] to

them, Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors..’ So he made them fall, through deception...”

(Surah al-A‘rāf, 7: 20-22)

The *Qur’ān* even clearly indicates Adam’s responsibility in the matter:

وَلَقَدْ عَاهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾

“And We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination.”

(Surah Ṭāhā, 20: 115)

4. Eve’s Punishment?

Both Adam and Eve repented and God accepted their repentance immediately:

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّا تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

“They said, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged our own souls, and if thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.’”

(Surah al-A‘rāf, 7: 23)

Thus, Adam and Eve begged for God’s forgiveness since Allah forgave the sins of the first pair as it has been stated in the Quranic version of the story. Generally, both the Noble *Qur’ān* and the Bible contain the story of Adam and Eve’s great downfall, when one reads both stories, one will not fail in noticing the *Qur’ān*’s vastly superior portrayal of what happened. Furthermore, God doesn’t curse Eve for her mistake by “increasing her pains in childbearing”. This concept was a contributing factor for the unequal treatment of women in early Christianity (for more info follow this link). Most importantly, God does not curse Adam for committing a sin and that sin is not inherited by the whole world. *Qur’ān* maintains that every person is responsible for their own actions. In several places that *Qur’ān* emphasized: *“And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.”*³⁵ Therefore, every person is responsible for their own actions and therefore, Eve is not considered as the main responsible for the issue of coming to the earth.

³⁵ Surah al-Fāṭir, 35: 18, Surah al-An‘ām: 164, Surah al-Taḥrīm: 66. Also Quran states: *“Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.”* Surah al-Mudatsir, 74: 38.

5. The Equality of Men and Women before Allah

According to *Qur'an* women are considered equal before Allah in performance of the religious duties, in the obligational orders:³⁶

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

*“Whoso doeth that which is right, whether male or female, and has faith, verily to him we will give a new life and life that is good and pure and we will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.”*³⁷

(Surah al-Naḥl, 16: 97)

So, in religious obligations such as daily prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage women are no different from men unless for the sake of their biological and psychological conditions such as exemption in prayer and fasting in menstruation period to rest more. So, according to the *Qur'an*, men and women are considered equal before God in terms of the obligational orders of performing religious duties.³⁸ The *Qur'an* has considered women to share the same nature and a single soul for man and woman in the order that they dwell in love.³⁹

6. The Social Responsibilities of Men and Women

The study of the condition of women in pre-Islamic era (even after it and even until last century in other societies) shows that Islam has bestowed Muslim women such social and economic rights which no other society, culture or religion had already given her.⁴⁰ These rights are including rights of possession, ownership, mortgage and performance all types of contracts (to sell, purchase, lease and entrepreneurship, speculation and other financial affairs) while she is

³⁶ Badawi, Jamal A., *The Muslim Woman's Dress According to the Quran and Sunnah* (Lahore: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1998).

³⁷ See also Surah al-Nisā', 4: 124, Surah Āli 'Imrān, 3: 195 and Surah al-Nūr, 24: 23

³⁸ Badawi, Jamal A., *The Muslim Woman's Dress According to the Quran and Sunnah*.

³⁹ Surah al-Nisā', 4: 1, Surah al-Zumar, 39: 6.

⁴⁰ Badawi, Jamal A., *The Muslim Woman's Dress According to the Quran and Sunnah*.

single or married.⁴¹ Also, she can seek employment, although Islam first prefer to regard her natural role in society as a wife and mother which is the most sacred and essential role.⁴² There are various other manifold rights of women that Islam granted to women: for instance “Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim (male and female).”⁴³

Also, woman cannot be forced to marry anyone without her agreement.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, there is a hieratical positioning for men above women⁴⁵ as a degree entitle *Qiwamah*⁴⁶ (maintenance and protection). This order refers to the natural differences between male and female that weaker sex need to protection. This limitation has nothing to do with the dignity of woman and her rights, rather regarded to her natural differences in the biological and psychological character. So, these differences imply the “complimentary” roles of both the sexes in life.⁴⁷ A. A. Mawdūdī writes that men are manager of women affairs because men spend of their wealth on women. The key word of *qawwāmūn* is most often translated as ruler (*ḥākim*) however, linguistically; this word refers to those who provide a means of support or livelihood.⁴⁸

Also, *Qur’ān* established some of the women as “examples” for all human.⁴⁹ In 66:10-12, four such are given, two of warning (“examples to the unbelievers”: the wives of Noah and Lot) and two for emulation (“examples to the believers”: Pharaoh’s wife and Mary the mother of Jesus). Generally, there have been mentioned about fifteen different names of faithful ladies in the *Qur’ān*, in which virtues of nine of them is much more emphasized than others. Virtues of exemplar women are introduced by *Qur’ān* as follows: the

⁴¹ Bukhari, Syed Abdul Ghaffar, ‘Role of Women in the Development of Islamic Civilization.’

⁴² Badawi, Jamal A., *The Muslim Woman’s Dress According to the Quran and Sunnah*.

⁴³ al-Bukharī, Muḥammad, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī*, vol. 1 (Beirūt: Dār al-Fikr, 2010), 71.

⁴⁴ Badawi, Jamal A., *The Muslim Woman’s Dress According to the Quran and Sunnah*.

⁴⁵ Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 228.

⁴⁶ *Qiwamah*. A specific form of responsibility of men for women. The *Qur’ān* establishes that men are *qawwāmūna ‘ala*: responsible for women. Wadud, Amina, *Quran and Woman*, 26.

⁴⁷ Badawi, Jamal A., *The Muslim Woman’s Dress According to the Quran and Sunnah*.

⁴⁸ Hassan, Riffat, ‘Equal Before Allah? Women-Men Equality in Islamic Tradition,’ 2-20.

⁴⁹ Stowasser, Barbara Freyer, *Women in the Quran, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

wife of Pharaoh, faith exemplar; mother of Moses (AS), exemplar of surrender to God, the wife of Moses (AS), modesty exemplar; mother of Mary (SA), exemplar of honesty and sincerity, Mary (SA) exemplar of chastity and modesty; wife of Zechariah (AS) exemplar of righteousness and obedience (SA) the wife of Job, a patient exemplar and the Queen of Saba, exemplar of surrender to God orders. In some *ahādīth* of the Prophet (SAW), mistresses of women in the paradise (and in another *hādīth*, world) are four: Mary (mother of Jesus), Asia (wife of Pharaoh), Khadijah and Fatimah. And the most perfect one is Fatimah. These examples in the teaching of Islam themselves indicate possibility of growth and excellence in female personalities to the top of humanitarian virtues. The history of Muslims is rich with great achievements of women especially as early as the seventh century. So, they could play a constructive role in Islamic civilization and serve as exemplars of virtues such as righteousness, strength, faith, obedience of God, purity and modesty.⁵⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The teachings of Abrahamic faiths on women's position are controversial issues and there are different understandings about the creation and role of women in their holy books. The outlooks of religions have constantly had crucial role on justifying the women's position in cultures. Although there are general similarities in the two versions of the creation story in *Qur'ān* and Torah, some significant principals would differ. Generally, under the teaching of the Torah, the conception of women has been influenced by the generalisation and extension of Eve's characters as main sinner in Genesis to all women.

Unlike of the Torah, in the *Qur'ān*'s considers equal and common blame on both Adam and Eve for their fails. Thus, in Islamic account, firstly, Eve is not known as the origin of Adam's sin, secondly they repented. Additionally, Eve is not to be punished to have the pains of childbearing or anything else. To sum up, the image of Eve as temptress in the Torah has yielded in a substantially negative impact throughout the Judaic tradition on women. Therefore, this comparative study can offer essential view for redefining the women dignity and the superiority of Quranic approach as objective of this study.

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Interview

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