

## Ibadah in Islam and Ahl e Kitab: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract

This study paper seeks to understand the ibadah notion (worship) in Islam and the way the People of the Book (Ahl e Kitab) practice it, which included Judaism and Christianity. The study is carried to discover both kinds of include close links concerning core performance of these religions as well as various points. The paper is initiated by discussion of ibadah in Islam as a service or worship by means of prayers, fasting, alms-giving, and the pilgrimage. After that it goes to what ibadah means for Judaism and Christianity. It view their scriptures and traditions. By doing this it is clear what their fundamental praises are (e.g. prayer, keeping the Sabbath, rituals). Making use of a comparative approach, the article talks about the convergence areas: the monotheism, divine submissive attitude, things like prayer or gratitude expression, supplicating or seeking forgiveness. At the same time, the research, likewise, focuses some major areas that lead them in difference, such as the different forms of prayers, restrictions in diets and the ways that have been used in interpreting the Scripture. By comparing these different types of worship in various Abrahamic religions, this research hopes to accomplish a deeper understanding of the diversity of ibadah and inspire mutual understanding among diverse communities.

**Keywords:** Ibadah, Islam, Ahl e Kitab, Judaism, Christianity, Abrahamic Traditions

### Introduction

Islam believes that ibadah (worship) is the central and most sacred aspect of a Muslim's life, for it is upon these acts of worship that the foundation of their faith and pious endeavors are built. Ibadah encompasses a wide range of acts of devotion and obedience to Allah, including prayer (salah), fasting (sawm), charity (zakat), and pilgrimage (hajj), among others (Quran 2:(21-22)). These acts are not merely rituals but are fundamental expressions of submission to the will of Allah and the acknowledgment of His sovereignty over all aspects of life (Quran 51:56.) Ibadah plays a central role in shaping the character and conduct of Muslims, guiding them in their daily lives and fostering a deep connection with their Creator (Quran 29:45), finally, conflicts can trigger geopolitical tensions, leading to potential economic sanctions, and, at worst, military intervention. The concept of ibadah underscores the holistic nature of Islam, integrating spiritual devotion with moral and ethical principles, and emphasizing the importance of worshipping Allah with sincerity and humility (Quran 6:163).

The term Ahl e Kitab as used in Islam refers to those faith groups who were given a divinely marked scripture prior to the revelation of the Quran, mainly Judaism and Christianity. Muslims recognize the followers of these monotheistic faiths as People of the Book due to their shared belief in the existence of one God and the prophetic lineage extending from Adam through figures

such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Quran 3:63). While Islam views the Quran as the final and complete revelation, it acknowledges the scriptures of Judaism (Torah) and Christianity (Bible) as preceding revelations that contain elements of divine guidance (Quran 3:34). *Ahl e Kitab* occupies a unique position in Islamic theology, as Muslims are instructed to engage with them in dialogue and cooperation based on shared ethical principles and reverence for monotheism (Quran 29:46).

Comparative research tools are at the core of the quest in seeing, understating and discovering the differences between various religions and at the same time identify the common grounds across faiths. To focus on the faith-related issues, such as values, practices, and historical reasonings, there are scholars of religions who get clues on the common morals, teachings, and ethics which are foundations of the shared human spirituality (Hussain, 2012). The use of comparative approaches enables the development of dialogue and mutual comprehension between the faithful members of different religious communities, so they can appreciate the value of religious diversity and have a pleasant atmosphere of interreligious relations. Furthermore, such analysis offers a wider pathway for the development of religious studies by discovering the similarities, influences, and interactions among different faiths which people follow and therefore we get to enrich our knowledge regarding the search and quest of the humanity for meaning and ultimate truth.

The aim of the current research is to investigate and evaluate the worship common for the believer's faiths (*ibadah*) of Islam and people of the book. We will be dealing with these spiritual concerns by looking at the analogous and contrasting ways in which Abrahamic religious systems are tackling issues of worship. The purpose for this is to enhance our comprehension of civil religion and the promotion of dialogue among disparate religious faiths on common spiritual values and principles. The analysis through a comparative approach draws our attention to the worldview of religious experience as a universal phenomenon based on the interaction with divine though various faith traditions have unique expressions and interpretations of this interaction.

### **Core Concepts of Ibadah in Islam**

In Islam, worship (*ibadah*) means a wide spectrum of spiritual exercises that at the same time serves as the way of connecting to Allah and indicating formally to His will. From among the foremost obligations is worship, prayer (*salat*), fasting (*sawm*), giving charity (*zakat*) and *hajj*. *Salah*, the ritual prayer performed five times a day, represents a direct communication between the individual and Allah, serving as a cornerstone of Muslim worship (Quran 29:No.45). Fasting during the month of Ramadan, abstaining from food, drink, and other physical needs from dawn until sunset, cultivates self-discipline, empathy for the less fortunate, and spiritual purification (Quran 2:183-185). *Zakat*, the obligatory giving of alms to those in need, underscores the importance of social justice, compassion, and solidarity within the Muslim community (Quran 2:22). Compartmentalization is attributed as one of the reasons women were able to cope with their daily lives. Finally, the pilgrimage to Mecca, known as *hajj*, symbolizes unity, equality, and spiritual renewal, as millions of Muslims from diverse backgrounds converge to fulfill this sacred obligation (Quran 3:97). They are based on the religious ideas of the only

divine origin, yieldedness, and the divine mercifulness. The purpose of ibadah is to establish and strengthen the bond between the individual and Allah, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of human existence, which is to worship and serve the Creator (Quran 51:56). People of Islam tend to express their gratefulness toward Allah's blessings by performing prayers, fasting, charity-giving and finally, they pray for their sins forgiveness, through pilgrimage, so as to achieve their elevation level spiritually and draw near to Him (Prophet Muhammad's hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). Each act of ibadah serves as a means of purifying the soul, cultivating righteousness, and attaining divine favor in this life and the hereafter (Quran 2:22).

A number of sours from Quran and Hadith underline the prominent role of ibadah in Islam. For instance, the Quran states, "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Quran 51:56), Allah concentrates on the role of praise in the fulfillment of human purpose of creation. Besides, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was reported in many hadiths, laying the emphasis on the supreme position of Salah, Sawm, Zakat and Hajj, and highlighting their role in the moral and ethical growth of individuals and communities according to what Islam obliges (hadiths of Sahih Bukhari and Muslim).

Through a variety of rituals, the highest expression of the worship of God, closeness to Him and spiritual bliss are guaranteed in Islam. Combining into one the theological ideas of tawhid, which is to say the belief in the one God, and rahma, which is to say the belief in the mercy of God, these practices that Muslims perform have the following composition: prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage each being an essential part of a Muslim's life. Quran and Hadith highlight how the life of a believer touches upon every aspect of the world, elevating ibadah in its role as a pillar and guide in the spirit journey of a worshiper towards God.

### **Ibadah in Judaism and Christianity**

The Judaism's fundamentals derive from a whole array of feats of piety and devotion which serve to maintain the covenant between God and the Jewish community enshrined in the Torah. Prayer carries a lot of weight and significance in Jewish worship as elements like the Shema and Amidah songs are seen as outlets which express the person's devotion to the Supreme power, as well as, the performance of gratitude and supplication (Jacob, 2017). In the same way, dietetic laws, commonly referred to as kashrut, serve to demarcate what foods are permitted and the methods of their preparation which, cohesively with the concept of holiness and sacredness, highlight the separation from the mundane (Levine, 2018). An essential practice is the observance of the Sabbath: beginning on the Friday night and finishing on Saturday evening, rest, communal worship, and affection for time are involved (Heschel,1951). The foundations of the Jewish worship which lay heavy emphasis on developing a most intimate relationship with God through prayer, the observance of the traditional laws of Judaism and on making the commonplace things holy as well.

According to Judaism, prayer is a way of accessing an individual and thanking God, in search for advice or in seeking pardon for their misdeeds (Jacob 2017). Practices such as daily prayers, reciting the blessing, and celebrations of holidays and life cycle events help people keep and remember the pact between God and the Jewish nation. (Biale, 1992). Adherence to Torah,

according to its countenance writ in Talmud, as well as other scriptures from the Jewish tradition, is essential to fulfill one's responsibilities being a Jew as well as life of righteousness and holiness (Neusner, 2000). As Judaism emphasizes both ritual and ethical obligations, thus, the idea of mitzvot (plural for the commandment) holds ritual and ethical obligations that direct practice and discipline of Jewish life (Kraemer, 2007). God's regulations being adhered to by the Jews, they showcase their allegiance to the Lord and their very being a part of the particular community of the covenant.

The practice of worship in the Christian faith centers on the life of Christ, his teachings and his salvific work. Praying is of a high importance to the Christian worship, as believers are practicing both of personal and collectiveness prayers in order to be close to God (Bainton, 1960). Sacramental rites, such as baptism and the Eucharist, are considered sacred ceremonies that depict a spiritual self-renewal, forgiveness of sins and the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in the lives of his followers (McGrath, 1999). New Testament records Jesus as a teacher. As Christians endeavor to comply with his narration, belief formation, values, and practices are shaped. Faith, grace, and redemption as in Christian belief play a crucial role in Christian theology as they describe the importance of a person's trust in God beyond any personal merits in matter of attaining salvation (Moltmann, 1992). The numerous Christian denominations mirror different worship styles, theology, and church administration, among which we can enumerate Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy that are liturgical and others that are more evangelical or Charismatic (Yong, 2011). Even though Christian doctrines have the following differences among them, their common denominator is the belief that Jesus Christ is the Savior and the source of divine power that makes us free and appropriate before God the Father (Pelikan, 2005).

Finally, at the heart of the Judaic and Christian religion is a set of practices which embrace among other things rituals, prayers, and ethical teachings that show the devotion of these believers to their respective deities and religious traditions. Yet Judaism stresses the importance of prayer, dietary laws, and faithfulness to Sabbath in Jews sense of religious identity and that of their covenant with God. However, Christianity, for their part, center on prayer, sacraments, and following the teachings and way of Christ for discipleship and salvation. Both religions underline the central role of faith, loyalty to religious rules among the people and common worship in building up an intimate link to God and to live a noble, virtuous life.

### **Comparative Analysis**

In doing the critical analysis of *fiqh-e-ibadah* of Islam with the ones of *Ahl e Kitab* (People of the Book), some similarities and dissimilarities become evident. Commonalities encompass the crux of the Abrahamic religions being monotheism, a central belief, expressing the a belief in one supreme deity (Tessler, 2014). Furthermore, two religions, Islam and *Ahl e Kitab* assert divine submission in the first place, the acts of devotion like praying, supplications and almsgiving as fundamental features of religious behavior (Biale, 1992; Jacob, 2017). This weaves the idea of in the dual process of discovering the centerman traits and the spiritual objectives of the followers of each faith tradition. Yet when it comes to the points of disagreement, different instances are revealed, for instance, the theological teachings, rituals, and the aims of the practices. In Islam, the

concept of God (Allah) is characterized by His transcendence, omnipotence, and mercy, emphasizing His oneness and sovereignty over all creation (Quran 112:1-4.) However, the divine nature of God in Judaism and Christianity can be different depending on the point of view (Kung, 1995; Levine, 2019; interpretation may vary of entire divine attributes, relationships, and divine role). By the same token though, though all of them use prayer as a popular act of their worship, they may differ in their rituals, kinds, and the language used thus reflecting each of their religious traditions and the historical context. (Biale, 1992; McGrath, 1999) Moreover, the functions and the theological significance of particular practices like fasting and pilgrimage may strikingly differ in each tradition across Islam and Ahl-I-Kitab by relying on different theological emphases and interpretations of these faith communities (Heschel, 1951; Levine, 2018).

These similarities and differences can mirror the historical development of these Abrahamic traditions, which are molded by unique theological, cultural, and socio-political contexts. Yet, Jews, Christians, and Muslims may be traced to the common embedment in the patriarchal genealogy of Abraham and in the reliance on common narratives and key ideas all through their history (Yong, 2011). Historical occurrences such as the revelation of Quran by Islam, the Babylonian exile in Judaism, and the life and teachings of Jesus by Christianity have impacted personalizing, rituals, and institutions of these religions (Pelikan, 2005; Jacob, 2017). Moreover, the contact between various religious communities and internal discord and conflicts have added a range of expressions and diversity to Islam as well as Ahl e Kitab (Nussbaum, 2000; Kazantzakis, 1995).

Finally, the comparative analysis between the fundamental principles of worship in Islam and those espoused by the adherents of Kitab shows a combination of aspects that both agree and differ, where the underlying values are the same but the points of divergence reflect differences in the teachings of the Abrahamic faiths. Although one common feature in religiosity for all faiths is monotheism, the same stand for submission to God, as a matter of devotion, prayer, and ethical conduct serve as unifying principles, the theological principles of God, rituals, and reason for practices within each faith varies, reflects unique theological emphases and historical developments of each faith tradition.

### **Discussion**

Investigating the importance of interfaith study of these religious practices will reveal the fundamental role of ibadah in its respective faith traditions. Scholars and practitioners will gain more insight in the sanitize and variation ways of ibadah when the relationship between the same and different ways of praying will be examined (Küng, 1995). There is a multiple ways that people manifest that and one of them to be process of comparison it does not only let us to value different traditions but also teach us to how people of different religions express their devotion and the point they they they are looking for the spiritual fulfilling. Hence, among those three religions, though prayer is universally accepted, how, e.g., prayers performed, the positions and the liturgical language vary significantly, which can be attributed to different theological understandings and cultures (Biale, 1992; McGrath, 1999).

Additionally, the comparison of ibadah practices has shown fruits willing on the table for interfaith discussions and partnerships that revolve around worship and spirituality. Through monotheism, ethical conduct, and acts of devotion core principles shared by faithful individuals from different religious camps, the faithful folks from different religious groups could book conversations with shared values and beliefs (Pelikan, 2005). Through interfaith dialogue representatives of rival communities get to share their insights, viewpoints, and experiences with each other thereby increasing awareness, respect, and tolerance (Neusner, 2000). Through investigation of identical and various ibadah methods, academicians as well as practitioners will be able to discover chances for a cooperation in the area of humanitarian activities, stand up for advocacy of social justice and bring to light the activities in the community that do not depend on religious boundaries thus promoting peace and harmony (Tessler, 2014).

Nevertheless, mentions of the study's limitations with regard to fundamental practices and the contrasting forms of exhibition within each religion, are vital. Although it may be helpful to focus on contrasting traditions regarding core ibadah practices to reveal the common values and the foundations of various religions is rather factors that could overlook the complex aspects like the wealth of experiences, what people believe in and how they interpret their ideas within each religion (Heschel, 1951). For instance, in the Islamic context some of the factors that influence the practice of ibada are the existence of various sects, schools of thoughts and cultural variations. This is according to the work of Yong (2011). For instance, Judaism and Christianity include a broad array of branches, movements, and theological views that are distinct in terms of their own liturgy, worship activities, and even spirituality (Levine, 2019; McGrath, 1999).

As a result, comparative studies of ibadah practices are a good resource for an overall concept of spiritual and religious life, but should never be the only point of reference; they have to be combined with approaches for specific traditions, contexts and interpretations, in order to provide analysis with more depth. In summary, studying the comparative dimension of Islamic Ibadah practices will disclose the place of devotion in each of these religions and reveal the prospects for dialogue and cooperation between them. Moreover, it will draw our attention to the need to take into account the diversity of manifestations within each religious tradition. Through studying such overlaps and divergences of ibadah rituals, scholars and practitioners develop mutual respect, tolerance, and cooperation within these religious boundaries which in turn may end changing the nature of relationships in local communities characterized by religious diversity.

### **Conclusion**

Summarizing, the comparison of ibadah rituals in Islam and Ahl e Kitab faiths shows a great similarity and divergence that emphasizes the abundance of worship types within the Abrahamic belief system. However, the concepts of monotheism, submission to God, worship, and ethical conduct are the common foundational principles in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Masses of these concepts, as well as rituals and the purpose of specific practices as plainly vary in each religion. The importance of realizing the differences in worship of Islam along with Abrahamic faith traditions should be hinged on the fact that interfaith understanding, as well as respect and cooperation, has to be deliberately instilled. In addition to comparative ibadah research in the

past, modern comparative research can dig further into the world religions, the cultural backgrounds, and the innovative ways in which both traditional and contemporary styles of worship are being practiced in a multicultural context, with the aim of gaining the knowledge necessary to maximize people's religious identity and quality of spirit in such environments. Through identifying and expressing these values, which may serve as a common denominator for different religious expressions, scholars and practitioners can play a vital role in creating the bridge between a variety of religious communities, creating a chain of peace, equality and coexistence.

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