

# Comparative Analysis of the Qur'an's Revelation and Codification with Judeo-Christian Scriptures

Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri

Citation format: Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri, "Comparative Analysis of the Qur'an's Revelation and Codification with Judeo-Christian Scriptures", CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 8, January 2024

## Abstract

In this article, we discuss the unique process of the revelation, compilation, and preservation of the Qur'an, contrasting it with the developmental histories of other key Abrahamic scriptures, namely the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. It explores how the Qur'an's formation, its methodical oral and written transmission, and its explicit claim as the final divine revelation distinctly set it apart. The article emphasizes the unaltered and meticulously preserved nature of the Qur'an, for its unparalleled authority and status within Islam. This comprehensive study underscores its role as a timeless and pristine guide in the Islamic faith, influencing countless aspects of Muslim life and culture.

*Keywords – Qur'an, Revelation, Codification, Islamic Scripture, Preservation*

## Introduction

The Qur'an stands as a beacon of divine guidance, unparalleled in its preservation and authenticity within the Abrahamic faiths. This article ventures into an in-depth analysis of the Qur'an, not merely as an Islamic text but as a monumental work of divine revelation, distinguishing itself significantly from other sacred scriptures such as the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

The journey of the Qur'an, from its revelation to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to its meticulous codification, is a testament to its unadulterated purity and divine safeguarding.

Unlike the Hebrew Bible, which is a compilation of texts from varied authors over centuries, or the New Testament, primarily a narrative of Jesus Christ's life and teachings, the Qur'an's emergence is marked by unwavering commitment to its integrity by its early adherents.

This article aims not only to chronicle the history of the Qur'an's formation but also to engage in a comprehensive cross-comparison with the religious texts of other Abrahamic faiths. Through this comparative lens, we will demonstrate how the Qur'an stands out as the most carefully preserved and unadulterated religious text in the world. The focus is on illustrating the unparalleled measures undertaken to maintain the Qur'an's authenticity, a factor that cements its authority and reverence in Islam.

Our exploration extends beyond the historical and theological dimensions, delving into how the Qur'an's enduring purity and unchanging message continue to shape Islamic civilization and guide millions of Muslims globally. This comparative study seeks to underscore the Qur'an's unique position in religious literature, reinforcing its role as a timeless and pristine guide in the Islamic faith.

## The Revelation of the Quran

The revelation of the Qur'an is deeply rooted in the historical and spiritual landscape of 7th century Arabia. This period was characterized by social turmoil, tribal divisions, and spiritual yearnings, creating a fertile ground for divine intervention.

The Qur'an's descent began in 610 CE, when Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), during his meditations in the Cave of Hira, received the first revelations from God through the angel Jibreel (Gabriel). This epochal event marks the commencement of Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) prophethood, heralding a new era of spiritual awakening and moral reform.

## The Nature of the Revelation

The Qur'an's revelation was a unique phenomenon as it was revealed piecemeal over 23 years. Each revelation, responding to specific events or challenges faced by the early Muslim community, was conveyed directly to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in precise and eloquent Arabic.

This method of revelation allowed the Qur'an to address immediate concerns while gradually building a comprehensive spiritual and legal framework.

## The Revelation Process of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

In contrast to the Qur'an, the Hebrew Bible's composition spans centuries, with various authors contributing to its narrative and legal texts under differing historical contexts.

The New Testament, primarily centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, is a collection of gospels and letters written by his disciples and early Christian leaders. These texts reflect a human element in their composition and compilation.

The Qur'an, on the other hand, asserts its direct divine origin without intermediary authors, a fact that sets it apart in the realm of religious scriptures. Its consistency and coherence, despite the span of its revelation, further attest to its divine authorship.

## The Codification and Compilation of the Qur'an

### Early Compilation Efforts During Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) Lifetime

The process of compiling the Qur'an commenced during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). As revelations were received, they were meticulously memorized by his companions and often inscribed on various materials such as parchment, palm leaves, and animal bones.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) meticulously oversaw this process, ensuring the accuracy and sequence of the revelations.

This organic method of preservation laid the foundation for the Qur'an's eventual compilation into a single, coherent text.

### Formal Compilation under the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and Uthman (رضي الله عنهما)

After the passing of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the need for a single, consolidated copy of the Qur'an became evident.

Under the caliphate of Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), the first official compilation was undertaken by Zayd ibn Thabit (رضي الله عنه), a close companion and scribe of the Prophet. This monumental task involved gathering all written pieces and cross-verifying them with the memories of the Huffaaz (memorizers of the Qur'an).

Later, under Caliph Uthman (رضي الله عنه), a standardized codex (Mus-haf) was produced to preserve the Qur'an's uniformity across the expanding Islamic empire. This version, known as the 'Uthmanic codex, eliminated any variations and ensured the consistency of the Qur'an's text throughout the Muslim world.

### The Compilation Processes of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

The Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh, was compiled over centuries, with its final form taking shape long after the events it describes.

The New Testament's compilation involved selecting certain texts from a larger corpus of early Christian writings, a process that took place over several hundred years.

In contrast, the Qur'an's compilation was completed within two decades of the Prophet's death, under the supervision of his direct companions. This swift and systematic approach, rooted in an unbroken chain of transmission from the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, is unparalleled in the history of religious texts.

## Oral and Written Transmission

## The Role of a Hafiz in the Preservation of the Qur'an

The oral transmission of the Qur'an has been a cornerstone in its preservation. This tradition rests heavily on the *Huffaaz*, individuals who have committed the entire Qur'an to memory.

This practice, initiated during Prophet Muhammad's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) time, ensured that the Qur'an was not solely reliant on written records, which could be susceptible to loss or damage. The remarkable precision in oral recitation across generations has been a testament to the effectiveness of this method in preserving the Qur'an's authenticity.

## The Establishment of the Written Text

Parallel to oral transmission, the written text of the Qur'an was equally significant. The original compilation under Caliph Abu Bakr and the standardization under Caliph Uthman (رضي الله عنهما) resulted in a definitive written scripture.

This written form was meticulously copied and distributed throughout the Islamic empire, ensuring uniformity in its textual content. The mutual reinforcement of oral and written traditions has been pivotal in maintaining the Qur'an's integrity over the centuries.

## Oral and Written Traditions of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

The oral and written traditions of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament present a contrasting picture.

The Hebrew Bible evolved through a complex process of oral tradition and later written compilations, with various texts being edited and redacted over centuries.

The New Testament's formation involved the collation of writings of the Apostles and early Christian leaders, which were initially transmitted orally and only later written down. The establishment of the canonical New Testament texts was a gradual process influenced by early Church councils and theological debates.

The Qur'an's simultaneous oral and written transmission, overseen by the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) companions, ensured an unparalleled level of consistency and authenticity from its inception.

This dual approach to preservation, unique to the Qur'an, has been instrumental in maintaining its unchanged form, a claim that no other religious texts can assert with such confidence.

## Final Revelation

Central to the Islamic belief is the Qur'an's claim as the final revelation from Allah (سبحانه وتعالى), a culmination of the divine guidance sent to humanity. Unlike previous scriptures, which were sent to specific peoples and times, the Qur'an is addressed to all of humanity for all time. This claim establishes the Qur'an not only as a continuation of the Abrahamic tradition but as the ultimate and conclusive divine communication, embodying the complete and final guidance for mankind.

## Significance in the Islamic Faith

The finality of the Qur'an holds profound significance in Islam. It implies that the message contained within its verses is the definitive guidance for human conduct, spiritual growth, and societal laws.

This aspect of finality also affirms the immutability of the Qur'an's teachings, seeing them as relevant and applicable for all times and contexts. This positions the Qur'an as the primary source of Islamic theology, law, ethics, and spirituality, influencing every aspect of a Muslim's life.

## Comparative Analysis with the Claims of Finality or Continuity in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

In comparison, the Hebrew Bible is seen in Judaism as an ongoing narrative, with the expectation of future prophetic revelations.

Christianity views the New Testament as the fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible's prophecies, with Jesus Christ as the central figure of divine

revelation. However, the New Testament itself does not explicitly claim to be the final revelation.

The Qur'an's explicit claim of finality sets it apart from these texts. It not only completes the narrative of previous scriptures but also corrects and supersedes them.

This aspect of finality and correction is a unique feature of the Qur'an, reinforcing its role as the ultimate criterion and a timeless guide for human conduct.

### Preservation and Authority of the Qur'an

The Qur'an's preservation is unparalleled in religious history. From the time of its revelation to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to the present day, the Qur'an has remained free from alteration or corruption. The meticulous efforts in memorization and documentation by early Muslims, coupled with the swift compilation and standardization under the Caliphate of Uthman (رضي الله عنه), have ensured the text's purity. This unbroken chain of preservation is a core aspect of the Qur'an's authority in Islam, providing a sense of continuity and unaltered divine guidance.

### The Qur'an's Status and Authority in Islamic Theology and Law

The Qur'an's status in Islam transcends that of a mere scripture. It is considered the literal word of God, complete and perfect in its form. Its authority is absolute in Islamic theology and law, serving as the primary source of Sharia (Islamic law) and a guide for personal conduct and spirituality.

This inherent authority of the Qur'an dictates the beliefs, rituals, and ethical standards of Muslims, shaping Islamic civilization and culture throughout history.

### Comparative Perspective on the Preservation and Authority of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament have undergone various translations, interpretations, and redactions over the centuries.

The Hebrew Bible's textual history involves a process of compilation, redaction, and canonization, leading to variations in its manuscripts.

The New Testament, compiled from various sources, also exhibits textual variations and interpretative differences among its manuscripts. These factors impact the authority and interpretation of these texts within their respective faiths.

In contrast, the Qur'an's unchanged and unchallenged text stands as a testament to its authenticity and divine origin. The absence of textual variations and the preservation of its original language affirm the Qur'an's unique place in the Islamic faith as the final and unaltered word of God.

### Conclusion

The Qur'an, from its piecemeal revelation to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) over 23 years, to its meticulous compilation and preservation, underscores a unique blend of divine providence and human dedication.

The Qur'an's claim as the final revelation, coupled with its uninterrupted preservation and unmatched authority, sets it apart from other Abrahamic scriptures.

While the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are revered in their respective faiths, their developmental histories exhibit a blend of human authorship and divine inspiration, leading to variations in manuscripts and interpretations over centuries.

The Qur'an, however, stands as the unaltered word of God, preserved in its original language and form since its revelation. It is believed that it would not have been possible without divine intervention. Allah promised in the Quran to protect and preserve the Quran – 'Indeed We have sent down the Quran and indeed We will preserve it.' (15-9).

This comparative study not only highlights the distinctiveness of the Qur'an's formation and preservation but also reaffirms its role as a

timeless guide for Muslims. The Qur'an's enduring purity, consistency, and relevance across ages serve as a testament to its divine origin and as a beacon of guidance for humanity.

In the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an's role transcends that of a mere text; it is a source of spiritual guidance, ethical conduct, and legal framework, deeply influencing every facet of Muslim life and culture. The unique aspects of its revelation, preservation, and authority reinforce its position as the ultimate criterion in Islamic theology and practice.

## Bibliography

1. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Tafseer Al-Asedi.
2. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Irshad Al-Asedi.
3. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Tajweed and Punctuation Marks in the Quran.
4. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Understanding the Origins of the Hebrew Bible. CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 7, June 2023.
5. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Understanding the Origins of the Talmud. CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 7, June 2023.
6. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Understanding the Origins of the Old Testament. CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 7, June 2023.
7. Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri. Understanding the origins of the New Testament. CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 7, June 2023
8. Watt, W. Montgomery. Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman. Oxford University Press, 1961.
9. Robinson, Neal. Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text. Georgetown University Press, 2003.
10. Buhl, F., and Welch, A. T. Muhammad in Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, Brill, 2012.
11. Esack, Farid. The Qur'an: A User's Guide. Oneworld Publications, 2005.
12. Ernst, Carl W. How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations. University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
13. Graham, William A. Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion. Cambridge University Press, 1987.
14. Warner, Martin. The Bible as Literature: An Introduction. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
15. Jeffery, Arthur. The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938.
16. Reynolds, Gabriel Said. The Qur'an in Its Historical Context. Routledge, 2008.
17. Rippin, Andrew. Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Routledge, 2005.
18. Leaman, Oliver. The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia. Routledge, 2006.
19. Neuwirth, Angelika. Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text. Oxford University Press, 2014.
20. Bar-Asher, Meir M. Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism. Brill, 1999.
21. Wild, Stefan. The Qur'an as Text. Brill, 1996.
22. Sinai, Nicolai. The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction. Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
23. Berg, Herbert. The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam. Routledge Curzon, 2000.
24. Wansbrough, John. Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation. Oxford University Press, 1977.

## About the Author



Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian, and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000 books on various Islamic subjects. He has written many research articles on religion, history, and other subjects. He is also the Editor in Chief of CIFIA Global Journal.