



An Investigation into Qur'anic and Historical Reasons for the Immigration and Presence of the People of the Book in Arabia

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Abstract

Although the People of the Book were not from the Arab lands originally, they had to immigrate to this lands, particularly Saudi Arabia. The discussions in this regard are mostly based on the records of the historians and narrators about the specific events as well as the Quranic verses and hadiths about them. Regarding the reasons for the immigration of the People of the book to Saudi Arabia, the analysis showed that the religious-doctorial factors, among others, were the most important and the only common factors leading to the immigration of the People of the Book to Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study also showed that some verses confirm the People of the Book recognized the Prophet of Islam. Other factors were also at play in their immigration. For example, the Jews' motives to immigrate to Arabia were economic and military. Moreover, such factors as being persecuted by the Jewish, wine trade, slave trade, science, and medicine led to the spread of Christianity in Saudi Arabia. The study also showed that in addition to the verses confirming the presence of the Jews and Christians in Mecca and Medina, there are also some verses on the debates and argumentations of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) with the People of the Book, indicating that they resided in Mecca and Medina as well. The aim of the present study was to investigate the factors leading to the immigration of the People of the Book to Arabia and their Presence in Mecca and Medina based on Historical records and Qur'an verses. The data were conducted through library research and analyzed using analytical-descriptive methods.

Keywords: *Factors; Immigration; Qur'an, People of the Book; Arabia*

Introduction

There is a disagreement among the scholars on the exact date of the immigration of the People of the Book to Arabia and the factors leading to their immigration. In his book *The detailed history*, Jawad Ali (1993) states "there is no strong historical text available on which one can base his/her argument on the date and causes of the immigration of the Jews to Saudi Arabia. However, what is certain is the presence of the People of the Book in Arabia (V. 6, pp. 511-14).

Islamic historical sources present different factors causing the Jews to immigrate to Saudi Arabia, including religious-doctrinal, economic, and military (i.e., the war against 'Amaliq, Bakht Al-Nasr's battle with the Jews, and the Jewish-Roman wars). Among these, only the religious-doctrinal factors have been mentioned in Qur'an. There are various verses about the People of the Book which specify that their recognition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was as much as their recognition of their children. The most important factors leading to the spread of the Christians in Arabia included being persecuted by the Jews, and wine trade, slave trade, science, and medicine. There were fewer Christians in Mecca and Medina since very few verses refer to the Christians and no historian has ever reported a serious encounter between the Muslims and the Christians.

The main research questions are as follows:

1. Is the religious reason the only or the most important factor leading to the immigration of the People of the Book, or are there other factors, too?
2. What are the other reasons for the immigration of the Jews and Christians?

In this study, the data were collected through library research and analyzed using analytical-descriptive method. There are some studies conducted on these topics, including:

Khavanin Zadeh, M. H. (2010). The cause of Exodus of the Jews to Arabia. *Pazuheshnameh Mar'arif Qur'ani*, 1(2), 25-38.

In this study, Khavanin Zadeh presents a few short and brief reasons for the immigration of the Jews without referring to Qur'an verses.

Khavas, A. (2014). The Jews in pre-Islam Arabian Peninsula: an analysis of the influence and effects of Judaism and ignorant Arab. *Ma'rifat-i Adyān*, 4(20), 67-84.

In this study, the researcher focuses on Judaism, the principle of the existence of the religion in the Ignorant era, the Jews' arrival to the Arab lands, the Jews' settlement in Arabia, and their tribes and leaders in Arabia. Therefore, there is a need for examining this issue based on Qur'an verses.

1. The Immigration of the Jews to Arabia

There are many disputes on the exact time of the Jews' arrival to Arabia and its causes. Throughout history, many researchers engaged in finding answers to these questions, yet they have not reached a definite answer. Jawad Ali who has conducted comprehensive research on pre-Islam Arab history writes,

Although the presence of the Jews in Hijaz before Christ is undeniable, one cannot talk about it decisively since there is not enough historical evidence available. In few texts discovered in Yemen, there is no reference to the presence of the Jews. Similarly, there is no reference to the ignorant-era (pre-Islam) Jews in the Hebrew books. However, studying the ignorant-era poems which mention the Jews, it can be understood that the ignorant Arabs knew the Jews and were aware of their residence in the lands between Palestine and Yathrib (present Medina) as well as in Yemen and Al-Yamama. All sources to which we have access to know the Jews are related to the Islam era, including ample Qur'an verses on the Jews, commentary books, hadith, *sira*, and history. (1993, V. 6, p. 511)

What is certain is that the Jews first settled in Yathrib. After them, Arab tribes such as Al-Aus and Al-Khazraj came to the region (Isfahani, n.d. P. 111). Medina is an ancient city located in the West of Saudi Arabia, in a wide valley named Wadi Al-Qura. This city was called Yathrib since Ancient times. 'Amaliq used to live there. Then, some Jewish tribes moved to Yathrib from the North and dispersed

there. In the early 4th century AD, two Sothern Arab tribes named "Al-Aus" and "Al-Khazraj" along with a group of their allies named Al-Azd moved to Yathrib and settled the place where the Jews were living (Fayyaz, 1993, p. 78; Louis, 1989, p. 111). Therefore, the first group settled in that land were the 'Amaliq. The Jews immigrated there before Christ, i.e., during the time of Moses, Joshua (or *Yehoshua*) and, David. After Christ, when the Romans conquered Quds, Roman Banu Qurayze and Banu Nadir immigrated to Yathrib (Louis, 1989, p. 111).

There are different views about the immigration of the Jews to Arabia. However, it is certain that many Jews left their homeland due to the oppression of the Roman rulers and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia. While not having a comfortable life in Palestine and European countries and Rome, their living condition in Saudi Arabia was satisfying. Obviously, due to the remoteness of Hijaz and Najd, some Jews immigrated to Saudi Arabia centuries before the advent of Islam, most likely at the time of the advent of Jesus or the second and third centuries AD. According to the available records, the Jews started to immigrate to Hijaz about five centuries before Islam, i.e., late first century AD. The Jews saw they could live there without the tyranny of the Roman Rulers. The most important center of the settlement was Yathrib. Realizing that there are proper lands and water in Yathrib, they built castles and settled there. There were few Jews in Mecca (Hussaini Beheshti, 2008, p. 57).

Various sources enumerated a set of reasons for the immigration of the Jews, the most important of which are as follows:

1.1 Religious and Doctrinal Factors

Religious and doctrinal factors were the most important reason to immigrate to Hijaz. There are ample Qur'an verses that state the Jews recognized the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his Book. For example, "Is it not a sign for them that the learned of the Children of Israel recognize it?" (Qur'an, 26:197). This verse explicitly shows that Israel scholars' awareness and recognition of the glad tidings of the Bi'tha of the Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) mentioned in the earlier Books is the proof of the authenticity of his prophecy (Tabarsi, 1993, V. 7, p. 320; Tabataba'i, 1997, V. 15, p. 320; Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi, 2000, V. 24, p. 533; Al-Tusi, 1982, V. 8, p. 63).

Moreover, many traits of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) have been mentioned in the Torah and the Evangel, which confirms the authenticity of the Qur'an and the prophecy of Muhammad (PBUH) (Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, 2000, V. 24, p. 533; Beizawi, 1998, V. 4, p. 150). Verse 114, An'am Surah, also mentions the recognition of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) by Jewish scholars: "... Those whom We have given the Book know that it has been sent down from your Lord with the truth; so do not be one of the skeptics".

The question of the recognition of the Prophet of Islam by Jewish scholars has been clarified: "And those to whom We have given the (Heavenly) Book know that this Book has been revealed from your Lord in truth". These verses, some of which were also revealed in Medina in the presence of the Jews, show that Qur'an insists on this in terms of *the argumentation and ultimatum*. Moreover, the silence of the People of the Book and acceptance of this saying by the Muslims, by itself, confirms that they were certain about this issue. 'Abdullah ibn Salam, among distinguished Jewish scholars, has admittedly confirmed this (Ja'farian, 1994, p. 130).

The doctrinal causes of the immigration of the Jews to Arabia can be found in Qur'an verses and narrations. Jawad Ali points out that the Jews of Arabia do not have any written record of their past. According to historians, the Jews were well aware of the place of the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) Bi'tha and *Hijra* (immigration). Accordingly, they selected Hijaz, Wadi Al-Qura, and Yathrib to immigrate. In his *Kitāb al-Mīlāl wa Al-Nīhal*, Al-Shahristani writes, "Moses and Jesus gave the glad tidings of the advent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Accordingly, the predecessors of the People of the Book built castles and forts near Medina to help the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam (1962, pp. 209-210).

The Jews immigrated to Medina because Jewish scholars had read the attributes of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in the Torah and known that he would advent in a land located between two Al-Harras (Ja'farian, 1994, p. 130), where there were a lot of palm trees. Then, the Jews departed from the Levant. Reaching Tima', they found out there were palm trees in that region. Some decided to settle there. A group went to the Kheybar district. However, a large number, including the nobles and the eminent, continued their way until they reached Yathrib. Seeing that Yathrib was located between two Al-Harras and had lots of palm trees, they concluded it was where the Holy Prophet (PBUH) would immigrate there (Al-Hassani Shafe'i, 1999, V. 1, p. 128). Additionally, there are some narrations about this. For example,

When Moses visited Ka'ba and performed his Hajj, a group of the Israelites (Children of Israel) accompanied him. On the way back to Palestine, they reached Medina. Visiting Medina, they realized that it was the place where the last Prophet whose attributes they had read in Torah would appear. Consulting with one another, they decided to stay there to help the Holy Prophet. Accordingly, some settled in *Banu Qaynuqa'* market (Al-Hassani Shafe'i, 1999, V. 1, p. 130).

1.2 Economic Factors

The increasing number of Jews in Palestine led to a situation in which there was not enough opportunity for the expansion of economic activities. The number of Jews was over four million people who could not fit in a small land like Palestine. Therefore, they were forced to immigrate to neighboring countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Arabia (Abd Al-Fattah Tabbareh, n.d., p. 17). Palestine was a bridge connecting Arab Cities. Syria was located on one side and Iraq and Egypt on the other side. Arab Caravans used to go to Israelites and Kan'an cities. During the time of Sulaiman and after him, Jewish merchants immigrated to Saba' land (Welenson, 1995, p. 8; Abd Al-Fattah Tabbareh, n.d., p. 17). It is stated in Jawad Ali's *Al-Mufasssal* that since Hijaz was connected to Palestine, Jews settled in Hijaz. Some Jewish tourists who had gone to Western Saudi Arabia for business purposes decided to live there. When Palestine was conquered by powerful states, the Jews found the chance to settle in Hijaz and other places until the advent of Islam. Saudi Arabia was divided into eastern and western regions. The Jews went to eastern Arabia through Iraq and settled on the coast of the Gulf and started to trade with the people of Arabia (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 514).

Arabia was not a good place to live in in terms of economy (Ja'farian, 1994, p.129). Moreover, if they immigrated to Arabian Peninsula to trade, then, few Jews who were merchants must have come to this land. However, most of them were not merchants, rather engaged in gardening, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. (Khavanin Zadeh, 2012, p. 59). Accordingly, it can be concluded that the economic factor was not a reasonable motive to immigrate.

1.3 Military Factors

Throughout history, there have been many wars against the Jews, which made them immigrate to the Arab regions. Military factors can be divided into two groups: the wars of other states and nations against the Jews, and the war of the Jews against others, both leading to the immigration of the Jews to Arabia. Reviewing the writings of the Muslim historians, one can find references to the connection of the Jews to the people of Medina and its history tracing back to the time of Moses.

1.3.1 Jewish War with 'Amaliq

According to History books, the successive attacks of 'Amaliq against the Israelites in the Levant made them complain to Moses. Moses sent an army to fight with 'Amaliq in Hijaz. He ordered Jews to kill all grown-ups unless they convert to Judaism. The Jewish army came to Hijaz and a big war started. They killed many 'Amaliq. They captured the beautiful son of the king of Hijaz. They took him to Moses so that he can decide about this beautiful young man. However, when they returned to Kan'an, Moses had already passed away. The soldiers told other Jews about the war. The people of Kan'an inquired about the young boy and told the soldiers if they did not kill him, they would commit a big sin; "therefore, we will

not allow sinners to enter our city". They did not allow the Army to enter the Levant. Knowing they had no place in the Levant, they returned to Hijaz and settled there. This was the first settlement of the Jews in Hijaz and Medina. Afterward, the children of Kohan ibn Harun joined them (Al-Hamawi, n.d., V. 5, p. 84; Al-Muqaddasi, n.d., V. 4, p. 129). In his *Kitab Al-Aghani*, Isfahani narrates:

Banu Qurayze and *Banu Nadir* were children of the Kohan ibn Harun, who lived in Yathrib after Moses and before dispersing from Yemen due to the 'Arim flood. Presenting evidence from Alib ibn Sulaiman, Abu Al-Faraj states that the residents of Medina were 'Amaliq. They were adventurous and wicked and dispersed in cities. Among them, Bani Haf (Na'if), Bani Sa'd, Bani Al-Irzaq, and Bani Matruq (Nazarun) lived in Medina, and Arqam conquered Hijaz from Yima' to Fadak and became its ruler. Moreover, the kings of Medina were 'Amaliq originally. 'Amaliq had a lot of farms and palm groves. When Moses sent troops to suppress Jabbareh, he sent an army of Israelites to fight with 'Amaliq, and ordered to kill every single one of them. However, they saved one of the children of Arqam. When they returned, they told the story. People said they had committed a big sin, so they were not allowed to enter the Levant. Accordingly, the army of Israelites returned to the land of 'Amaliq and settled in Medina. This was the first settlement of the Jews in Yathrib. Then, they dispersed around, built forts, and acquired properties and farms (Isfahani, n.d., V. 5, p. 483).

1.3.2 Bakht Al-Nasr Battle with the Jews

According to some Muslim historians, the Jews came to Hijaz in the era of Bakht Al-Nasr since the time Bakht Al-Nasr conquered the Levant, he killed many Jews and captured a number of them. Some Jews left there; Passing cities and places between the Levant and Yemen, they arrived at Hijaz and Yathrib and settled there (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 1992, V. 1, p.117; Al-Baladhuri, 1988, V. 1, p. 15; Al-Hassani Shafe'i, 1999, V. 1, p. 177). This is beautifully detailed by Al-Tabari:

When Bakht Al-Nasr and his Army attacked Jerusalem and fought with the Israelites, they killed Jewish warriors and captured their wives and children. The Almighty God had sent Jeremiah to the children of Israel. He forbade Jews from corruption. However, they put them in prison to kill him. Jeremiah told the children of Israel, "The Almighty God will send you His Divine punishment. A king will come from Babylon, who will put you in prison for years". Accordingly, Bakht Al-Nasr arrived, destroyed the city, killed people, released Jeremiah, and highly respected him. The Jews who had remained in the city asked Jeremiah to ask God to accept their repentance. God told Jeremiah, "If the Jews are right, they have to stay with you in Jerusalem". The Jews said, "How we should stay in a city where God has destroyed it out of His wrath". Therefore, they left there to go to Egypt (Bal'ami, 1999, V. 1, p. 464).

Al-Tabari follows Bakht Al-Nasr wrote a letter to the Pharaoh of Egypt, asking to send the Jews back. According to Al-Tabari, the Pharaoh rejected his request. Therefore, Bakht Al-Nasr's army attacked Egypt and killed the Pharaoh. Many Egyptians were captured. At this time, The Israelites dispersed, some went to Hijaz, Yathrib, and Wadi Al-Qura (Bal'ami, 1999, V. 1, p. 464).

1.3.3 Jewish-Roman Wars

Some historians have referred to the Romans' wars against the Jews, including the battle of Titus in 70 AD, and considered them as the cause of the immigration of the Jews to Arabia. In fact, one of the causes of the immigration of the Jews to Medina is said to be the defeat of the Israelites by the Romans (Al-Hamawi, n.d., V. 4, p. 72; Al-Malaṭī, 1992, p. 21; Al-Muqaddasi, n.d., V. 4, p. 29). However, there is no valid evidence available for this event. For example, some historians argue that there is no reliable text in this regard and that the immigration of the Jew during the time of Titus and Ptolemy is not evident (Shawqi Daif, 1119, V. 1, P. 97).

According to historians, some Nabataean writings were found in Hajar and other parts of The Nabat which contain Hebrew names, indicating their writers were Jews. Some of the writings date back to

the first century AD and some belong to the next centuries. For example, there is a book dating back to 307 AD, authored by a man named Yahya bin Simeon. These books reveal no information about the opinions of their authors and their history in these lands (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 513).

Due to the fact that Jewish refugees lived in the Arab land, a group of Palestine residents naturally moved to Hijaz and Yathrib heights about the first century AD. After the Romans' ruling over Levant and attacking the Hebrews, they sought refuge in their cousins since this land was far from the reach of Roman (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 518). On the other hand, the Jews obviously viewed the Arabs living on the Eastern borders of the Arab land as the descendants of Ibrahim and Ismail and, therefore, their relatives, and hoped they would accept the religion of Ibrahim, the ancestor of the Arab and Jews (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 514).

Moreover, 'Abd Al-Aziz Al-Salim writes about the immigration of the Jews to Arabia and refers to the Raman attack on the Jews:

Jews entered Yemen through the border of The Himyarite Kingdom and Yathrib. It is known that after the Romans' attack on Jerusalem in 70 AD, which led to the destruction of the city, a group of Jews immigrated to the north of the Arab land and Hijaz. Some settled in Yathrib and Tima'. Some moved to Kheibar, Fadak, and Wadi Al-Qura (Al-Salim, 1993, V. 1, p. 433).

From the above reports, it can be concluded that the different reasons mentioned for the immigration of the Jews are contradictory and that the Jews immigrated to the Arabian land in several stages. However, it is certain that the Jews lived in Yathrib before Al-Aus and Al-Khazraj and were considered as their leaders.

2. The Jews' Presence in Mecca

In the Holy Qur'an, there are verses on the presence of the Jews in Mecca. For instance, in the Meccan Al-Imran surah, verse 64, God states, "Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a common word between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that some of us will not take some others as lords besides Allah ...'" In addition, the debates and argumentations between the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Jews in Mecca confirm the Jews' presence in this city. Among them are their debates with the Prophet (PBUH) about the revelation Allah has sent down to mankind which is mentioned in verse 91, Al-An'am surah: "... Say, 'Who had sent down the Book that was brought by Moses as a light and guidance for the people ...'"

3. The Jews' Presence in Medina

There were also some debates between the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Jews in Medina, which again proves their presence in Medina. Following the Jews' questioning about the Change of the Qibla, the Almighty God states, "... Say, 'To Allah belong the east and the west. He guides whomever He wishes to a straight path'" (Al-Baqarah, 142). In this verse, God points out that the east and the west are not important by themselves, rather it is the Divine choice which grants them honor and dignity. When God selects a place as the Qibla, it is honored just because of being the Qibla. Whoever turns toward the Qibla, s/he is on the straight path of guidance (Tabataba'i, 1997, V. 1, p. 318). According to God, everywhere is the kingdom of God and He will honor every place at any time out of His interest and wisdom (Al-Tusi, 1982, V. 2, p. 5; Tabarsi, 1993, V. 1, p. 413).

4. Factors Leading to the Spread of Christianity in Arabia

Judaism was not the only Divine religion the followers of which immigrated to Arabia. Rather, other religions, including Christianity, were also found among the Arabs. Christianity emerged after Judaism (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 582). In *Al-Mufasssal*, Jawad Ali states that it is not possible to determine the exact date of the Christians' arrival at Arabia. However, some Christian historians

attempted to show the immigration of the Christians to Arabia happened early history of Christianity. Though, it is necessary to review the oldest written records available, about which there is no doubt (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 586). According to Shawqi Daif (1119), "the Christians most probably immigrated to Yemen from early fourth century. One of the most important causes of their immigration was the religious motives which the emperors were looking for" (V. 1, p. 99).

Unlike the Jews, Christians did not immigrate to Hijaz, Yemen, or Bahrain. Rather, they dispersed mostly in the Levant since it was under the influence of the Byzantine government which promoted Christianity among their people and other nations, particularly nations that were economically important to them. Furthermore, in order to strengthen their army against the Iranians who had the most powerful government of the time, the Byzantine government need to have a political and military influence on other nations (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 591).

4.1 Religious and Doctrinal factors

The religious motive was the most important factor leading to the immigration of Christians to Arabia. As it was pointed out about the Immigration of the Jews, Christian scholars also completely recognized the Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH), just like they recognized their own children. According to An'am Surah, verse 20, "those whom We have given the Book recognize him just as they recognize their sons. Those who have ruined their souls will not have faith". Similarly, in another verse, it is mentioned that they recognized the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) traits and acknowledge his prophecy: "those who follow the Apostle, the untaught Prophet, whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Evangel..." (A'araf: 157). Here, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is not named; rather, his traits are mentioned as "Apostle", "Prophet", and "untaught", particularly it is added that "whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Evangel ..."

Accordingly, it is well understood that the Holy Prophet has been described in the Torah and the Evangel as having the same three traits since, apart from the given verse, no verse describes the Holy Prophet (PBUH) using these three attributes. If the aim had not been to describe him using traits familiar to the Jews and Christians, there was no point in using those attributes, particularly the third one (Tabatab'i, 1997, V. 8, p. 278).

According to Ibn Hisham, both the Jews and the Christians had been well aware of the advent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of Islam and had proclaimed the good news of his advent referring to their Holy Books, in which their Prophets ask them to follow the Seal of the Prophets (PBUH) (Ibn Hisham, 1993, V. 1, p. 304).

4.2 Christians' Persecution by the Jewish

After the crucifixion of Jesus, his disciples left Al-Jalil and went to Jerusalem where there were many synagogues. The Christians adhered to the Laws of Moses. However, the Jews gradually started to persecute them. In many cases, their conflict led to the persecution of the Christians by the Jews. The first massacre of the Christian as people with specific religion occurred during the reign of Nero in Rome. Undoubtedly, it was instigated by the Jews who had a great influence on the court of Rome. In other places such as Anatolia where many Christians live, people strongly opposed Christianity as a result of the Jews' sedition. Due to these persecutions, Christians left Jerusalem, heading to other lands. This played a key role in the spread of the Christianity in Arab lands (Delacy, 1963, pp. 66-67). Delacy writes, "The execution and persecution of the Christians, or being exposed to it, acted as a driving force making them emigrate from the Rome Empire territories. This was an important means of the spread of Christianity" (Delacy, 1963, p. 68).

4.3 The Wine Trade

Trading was one way led to spread of Christianity in Saudi Arabia. Unlike the Jewish Traders, Christian merchants believed that trading is to gain money. However, one can gain worldly and otherworldly benefits by preaching religion while trading. Therefore, they made the best of traveling to other lands to preach their religion.

The wine trade is common in primitive Arab lands. The wines of Beit Ra's, Andarun, and Basri were as famous as those of Huran or Lebanon Valley and the Hira in the lower part of Babylon. The Jewish and Christian merchants carried these wines in pots and leather bottles to Saudi Arabia and sold them there (Blachère, 1984, V. 1, p. 76). They traded other goods too. As a result of communicating with these merchants, some Arabs, including two sons of Abu Al-Hasin, converted to Christianity. In Tafsir of Al-Tabari and Tafsir Al-Qurtubi, it is written, "the merchants had brought with themselves oil from the Levant. Having sold their goods, the merchants were about to return to their town when invited them to Christianity and they converted to Christianity" (Al-Tabari, 1992, V. 3, p. 10; Al-Qurtubi, 1985, V. 3, p. 28).

The monastery of the Christians also played an important role in Arabs', particularly Arab merchants, acquaintance with Christianity. In fact, Arab merchants used to stay mostly at the monasteries during their travel since in addition to Water, they had access to other types of drinks such as wine, garden, and vegetables which were provided by the Monks. Through the monks and their religious practices, the Arab guests learned about their religion, were impressed, and some converted to Christianity (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 589).

Through these monks and their religious practices, the Arab guests came to know their religion and the religious practices they performed and were influenced by them, and some became Christians (Jawad Ali, 1413, V. 6, p. 589).

4.4 Slave Trade

The slave trade was another way that led to the spread of Christianity in the Arab Peninsula. Christians imported slaves from the important markets of the world. The most expensive slaves were from Rome Empire and Persia. They had privileges over the African slaves and had been mostly Christian before the advent of Islam. The Christian slaves recited. Wrote and explained Torah and the Evangel to people in Mecca, Ta'if, Yathrib, and other places. They also retold the Christian narration to the Arabs and explained Christianity. Accordingly, some Arabs converted to Christianity. They also kept some from paganism. However, they were not able to persuade them to convert to Christianity. They just became indecisive between the two (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, pp. 588-589).

In Mecca, the slaves and barbarian Warriors were Christian. Their enmity with Meccan infidels was revealed after the advent of Islam. Influenced by the slaves, some Meccan merchants converted to Christianity (Blachère, 1984, V. 1, p. 87).

4.5 Science and Medicine

Due to their knowledge, particularly in medicine and logic, and their expertise in influencing others, Christians were able to impress some of the tribal leaders, persuading them to convert to Christianity or, at least, behave toward them favorably. It has been said that some Tribal leaders converted to Christianity when the Cristian Monks treated their diseases. It has also been narrated that the Cristian Monks healed some barren women through praying and appealing to God and the women gave birth to children, particularly sons. What is interesting is that they attributed their activities to Divine miracles and blessings. Particularly, they did not care about the difficulties and hardships they faced in this way. They would go to the remote areas of Saudi Arabia. Some were with the Arabs under any circumstances, living with them in tents, such that they were entitled *Asqafi Al-Khiyam* and so (Jawad Ali,

1993, V. 6, p. 588). In addition, at the time of famine or outbreak of a contagious disease, the Christian Monks changed their monastery into centers serving the Bedouin (Blachère, 1984, V. 1, p. 84). People's favorable views to the Christians is also reflected in Qur'an: " Surely You will find the most hostile of all people towards the faithful to be the Jews and the polytheists, and surely you will find the nearest of them in affection to the faithful to be those who say 'We are Christians.' That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant" (Al-Ma'idah: 82).

5. The Presence of the Christians in Mecca and Medina

There were fewer Christians in Mecca and Medina, the main bases of early Islam and Muslims. According to Jawad Ali (1993), very few verses of Madani Surahs focus on the characteristics and beliefs of the Christians, but no mention is made of their presence in Yathrib. Moreover, none of the historians reported any serious conflict between Muslims and Christians. They have also not reported the confrontation between the Christians and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) not as much as the confrontation between the Jews and the Prophet (PBUH). Of course, this does not mean that the Christians did not live in Mecca and Medina because Christian slaves were in both Mecca and Medina, who served their Arab masters. So, though doing trivial things, they had their own place among them (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, pp. 601-2). In fact, Christians mostly concentrated in Najran. Najran Christians were Jacobite, which was because of their connection to Habesha since Habesha peoples were also Jacobite (Amin, 1975, p. 26). This does not mean there was no Christian in the major cities of Hijaz, including Mecca and Medina. According to Historical narrations, Yemeni Christians sought to spread Christianity in Hijaz (Shawqi Daif, 1119, V. 1, p. 99).

5.1 Christians in Mecca

Jawad Ali (1993) states that the slaves, merchants, and evangelists were present in Mecca at the time of the advent of Islam. Furthermore, the existence of a large number of Christian slaves indicated the presence of Christianity in Mecca. As mentioned, a group of white slaves who were literate told their masters about their religion, lands, and stories. Accordingly, some Arabs converted to Christianity (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 603). There were also Roman female slaves in Mecca (Shawqi Daif, 1119, V. 1, p. 100). According to Al-Ya'qubi, some people of Quraysh converted to Christianity shortly before Islam, including Waraqah ibn Nawfal, Utbah ibn Abi Lahab, and Uthman ibn Huyrith Sadi (Al-Ya'qubi, n.d., V. 1, p. 257). The presence of Christian Monks who engaged in Medicine in Mecca also proves the presence of Christianity in this city (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 606). The portraits of the Prophets and the Image of Jesus and Mary painted on the wall of the Ka'ba are another proof of the presence of Christians in Mecca (Al-Ya'qubi, n.d., V. 6, p. 607). In addition, the cause of revelation of the 103rd verse of Nahl Surah, a Meccan surah, is related to a Christian man, which again is an indication of the Presence of Christians in Mecca: " We certainly know that they say, 'It is only a human that instructs him.' The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic, while this is a clear Arabic language".

Interpreting this verse, some commentators (e.g., Al-Tabari, 1992, V. 14, p. 119; Al-Tha'labi Neishabouri, 2002, V. 6, p. 43; Al-Suyuti, 1984, V. 4, p. 131; Al-Alusi, 1995, V. 7, p. 468; Tabataba'i, 1997, V. 12, p. 350) quote the Companions, saying the cause of the revelation of this verse was a Roman freedman who was Al-Hadhrami and Christian. He lived in Mecca and was familiar with the Book of the People of the Book. The polytheists traduced that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was trained by a man who was himself the owner of the Book. In response, God revealed, "The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic, while this is a clear Arabic language" (Nah Surah: 103). In *Al-Durr Al-Manthur*, Al-Suyuti (1984) writes, "The polytheists stated that Salman Farsi is teaching him. God answered, "The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic" (p. 131). Tabataba'i (1997) rejects Al-Suyuti' view and says that this narration is not compatible with the given verse being Meccan (V. 12, p. 352).

According to Blachère (1984), Qur'an itself testifies to the influence of Christianity in Saudi Arabia. For example, Al-Rahman means The All-beneficent, and that the common translation of it as

"Mericful" is wrong, which is one name of God. This word is found in the inscription of the Ma'rib Dam. There are other Christian words in Qur'an as well, including "Rajim" (cursed), "Bible", "pulpit", "apostle", etc. It is beyond the scope of the present study to see whether these words were domesticized in Mecca or Qur'an directly brought them into Arabic. The key point is that these words indicate the effect of Christianity even in Hijaz (Blachère, 1984, p. 80).

The argumentations of the Qur'an also indicate the presence of Christians in Mecca. For example, "Say, 'Whether you believe in it, or do not believe in it, indeed when it is recited to those who were given knowledge before it, they fall down in prostration on their faces" (Al-Isra': 107) (see also, Al-'An'am: 114; Al-A'raf: 157; Al-Ra'd: 36, 43; Hajj: 24; Al-Qasas: 52,55; Al-'Ankabut: 46,47; Al-Saba':6; Ash-Shura: 14, 15; Az-Zukhruf: 57,63,59,63, and 65).

5.2 Christians in Medina

The non-Muslim groups living in Medina were not limited to the Jews. Rather, Christians, Sabianians, and Zoroastrians lived there as well. Some verses refer to the presence of the Christians in Medina. For example, "Indeed the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him, 'Be,' and he was" (Al 'Imran: 59), which explains the situation of the Najran Christians of the day in Media. After retelling the story of Jesus, it is concluded that the quality of the birth of Jesus does not imply more than this (Tabataba'i, 1997, V. 3, p. 212). Other commentaries also state that the cause of the revelation of the given verse confirms the presence of Najran Christians in Medina and their debates with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) on the quality of the birth of Jesus (Al-Alusi, 1995, V. 2, p. 179; Tha'labi Neishabouri, 2002, V. 3, p. 83; Al-Andalusi, 2002, V. 1, p. 446). Other verses implying the presence of the Christians in Medina and their debate with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) include Al-Baqarah: 11, 120, 135; Al 'Imran: 59, 62; Al-Nisa': 171, 172; Al-Ma'idah: 14, 15, 17, 18, 51, 72, 76, 82, 83, 116; Al-Tubah: 29-34; Al-Hadid: 27. It can be understood that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had visited different Christian groups in Medina at different times. Those groups were either resident of Medina or had come from Najran, Yemen, Habesha, and the Levant to Medina to debate with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) about the religion (Jawad Ali, 1993, V. 6, p. 603).

In his book *Al-Nasraniyyah wa Al-Adabiha Arab Al-Jahiliyyah*, Louis (1989) states that it is certain that the Christians entered Yathrib after Jesus (p. 111).

In addition, Jawad Ali (1993) argues that no important point has been mentioned on the presence of the Christians in Yathrib. It has only been said that just like the Jews, the Christians lived in Yathrib which perhaps was a place in which people of the Levant who intended to go to Medina traded (p. 603). In fact, most of the Christians did not live in the heart of Arabia, rather they lived on the outskirts like "Al-Harra" and Cites of the Levant. Some Arab Tribes were Christians (Louis, 1989, p. 115).

The Christians had special place in Hijaz and Saudi Arabia. Christianity had entered Saudi Arabia only a little before the Holy Prophet (PBUH), i.e., 150 years before the advent of Islam. Just like the present time Christian missionaries who travel to Africa, South African, and forests, then Christian missionaries also travel to Saudi Arabia desert to preach their religion and, for the first time, a group of Christian missionaries entered Najran where many people were impressed and, accordingly, the first Christian Arab region was established in Saudi Arabia. Najran Christians started to preach their religion. Missionaries who had come from other countries managed to go to the heart of Saudi Arabia and preach Christianity (Hussaini Beheshti, 2008, p. 59).

Christian Merchants who had come from the Levant to Trade also played an important role in the spread of Christianity in Yathrib. A number of young people of *Al-Aus* and *Al-Khazraj* became interested in Christianity and converted to it, including two young people from Bani Al-Salim ibn 'Awf, who became Christian before the advent of Islam and accompanied a group of *Al-Ansar* (The Helpers) traveled to Medina to trade food. Their Father, called Abu Al-Hussain, invited them to convert to Islam. However,

they refused to do so. Abu Al-Hussain who was upset because of having such sons appealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stated that "there is no compulsion in religion" (Al-Baqarah: 256) (Al-Tabari, 1992, V. 3, p. 10; Al-Wahedi, 1991, p. 86).

Finally, it should be noted that the exact time of the arrival of Christianity in Saudi Arabia cannot be determined. As was mentioned, Christian missionaries traveled to different places to preach their religion just from its beginning. In addition, the Christian monasteries which were built in different parts of Saudi Arabia and the commercial caravans are the factors leading to the immigration of Christians to Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

- Although the exact time of the arrival of Christianity in Saudi Arabia cannot be determined, it is certain that they immigrated to Arabia in different periods of time.
- Among different reasons mentioned for the immigration of the People of the Book, the religious-doctrinal factors were the most important and the only common factor leading to the immigration of both Christians and Jews. The people of Book recognized all the traits of the Prophet of Islam, which is confirmed by Qur'an verses. Other factors also played roles in their immigration.
- The Jew's other motives to immigrate to Arabia were economic and military.
- Such factors as being persecuted by the Jewish, wine trade, slave trade, science, and also medicine led to the spread of Christianity in Saudi Arabia.
- Historical records and Qur'anic evidence indicate that the Christians and the Jews resided in Mecca and Medina.
- According to the reports on the reasons for the immigration of the People of the Book, it can be concluded that the reasons are not contradictory and that they immigrated to Saudi Arabia in several stages.

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