

“Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Peace be Upon Them):
Perseverance for the Thought of Coexisting

-- Omar Buhisi

The social figure, Muhammad Ali, once quoted “Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams - they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do - they all contain truths.” Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are the three prevalent monotheistic religions and are signified by the term, Abrahamic faiths. Presently, there are circa 3.8 billion people that are followers of these Abrahamic religions. All three religions speak of a struggle between good and evil, which is conflated with obedience or disobedience to God. The three Abrahamic faiths were signified by influential leaders that tried to change their community by challenging the assumptions made for what society thinks is right. Each of these prophets is a bearer of a divine mission. They left behind them a sacred book that incorporated codes of life that are meant to guide their people. Abdu'l-Bahá has stated that anger, jealousy, and hatred are atrocious attitudes and emotions that would be brought about on society unless an educator comes to teach humanity. These influential educators will come from time to time to try to change a corrupt world. The education preached by the prophets of the Abrahamic faiths lies in different levels and includes education for each individual and thus becoming beneficiary for human society as a whole. Muhammad, Moses, and Jesus (Peace Be Upon Them), all had to fight against corruption and arrogance. The rise of hatred and corruption lead to injustice and this brought forth necessary revelations to society. Different methods were used by each of these leaders in their attempts to improve the conditions and lifestyles of all people. As the setting and the mentality of people changed, injustice was brought about in different ways.

The first prophet of the three Abrahamic faiths was Moses who came about circa thirteenth century BCE. He is attributed with the authorship of the Torah. As a Biblical Hebrew significant figure he is accredited with being a religious leader, lawgiver, prophet, and military leader. The Prophet Moses withstood many struggles throughout his lifetime. The Bible, Torah, and Quran all mention his life and the messages he brought to his people. One message which has been focused on throughout all three Holy Books concerning Moses, Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH), is the way he spoke to his people, to the Pharaoh, to strangers. When he came to address the Pharaoh about the conditions in which he treated the people of Israel, God told him to speak to him with "gentle words so that hopefully he will pay heed or show some fear." (Quran, 20: 43-44). Using kind language when speaking to your human brother is highly effective and God looks upon such language with high favor.

Although Moses was afraid that Pharaoh might kill him because he had killed a man, God reassured him and told him he was with him and to continue his path to tell the Pharaoh to free the children of Israel. What was even more daunting to Moses was that he had to tell the Pharaoh, who believed he was infallible and God-like, that he was wrong in his beliefs and actions. Nonetheless, he maintained his stance and did what God asked him to do in his gentle manner. The Exodus story of God's liberation of the Israelite slaves has been the most motivating tale for humanity's diverse societies to fight for political freedom. The significance of this event lies under the ideology that God intends that, ultimately, all of his people be free.

Jesus is known among all the Abrahamic faiths as a very generous man. Yet, his characteristics distinguish him in the eyes of Christians for he is stated in the gospels, as the Messiah, who came to give his life as a ransom for many. He has persevered through harsh times and still did not resort to strict violence and bloodshed. As a peacemaker he always taught of

topics that revolved around grace, repentance, unconditional love, forgiveness of sin, and the coming of the kingdom of God. The teachings of Jesus are correlated with the ideology that evil cannot be effectively countered by violence. His encouragement for unconditional self-sacrifice for the love of God and for all people caused many followers to obtain positive characteristics such as humility, selfless service to society, love for one's enemies as well as friends, and the ability to turn the other cheek even when times get tough.

Jesus was not only appealing to his followers for he tried to reach out to all that he can. His attribute of tremendous benevolence made him unique. Jesus tried to appeal to all so he even met with society's outcasts. Such people were the publicans, who were imperial tax collectors that were detested for extorting money. Jesus also obtained wisdom for even when the Pharisees objected to his meetings with the sinners instead of the virtuous; he replied that it was the sick that needed medical attention, not the healthy.

The founder of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), is regarded by Muslims as the last messenger and prophet of God. He was able to drastically alter history and attract billions of followers through his ideas and character. His life is considered to be a tireless campaign against greed, injustice and arrogance. He prevailed in accomplishing his goals by compassion, wisdom, and steadfast submission to God. Karen Armstrong profiles the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as "one who preached loyalty to God rather than tribe; reconciliation rather than retaliation; care for orphans and the poor; and in many ways, empowerment of women."¹

Ever since Muhammad (PBUH) was a young adult, he did all that was in his power to commit deeds that were for the betterment of humanity. As a passionate member of an organization called *Hilf al-fudul*, he was able to practice chivalry. Since this association's goal

¹ Armstrong, Karen. Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths. New York; 1997.

was aimed to help the oppressed in Mecca, he was able to learn about society's conditions. He incorporated his understandings with his charismatic character and became a fervent leader.

In the year 10 Hijra, the Islamic lunar calendar, Muhammad (PBUH) met 140,000 Muslims when he went to Mecca for *Hajj* (pilgrimage). These Muslims came to fulfill their religious obligation and were addressed by the prophet's celebrated sermon in which he summarized the purpose of his teachings. "Belief in One God without images or symbols, equality of all the Believers without distinction of race or class, the superiority of individuals being based solely on piety; sanctity of life, property and honor; abolition of interest, and of vendettas and private justice; better treatment of women; obligatory inheritance and distribution of the property of deceased persons among near relatives of both sexes, and removal of the possibility of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few." ²

The prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was able to create a sense of wellbeing even when the people of society were suffering from a state of chaos. As people started to become enemies with each other, he allowed his leadership to rise above many so that he can bring about a disciplined society. By establishing a new system of law, he was able to dispense justice. This goal was accomplished by approaching those considered to be of a high social class as equal subjects with the commoners. Soon after enduring a struggle caused by those who were disinterested in his teachings, all the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula and the southern regions of Iraq and Palestine had voluntarily embraced Islam. Because of his religious tolerance, even the non-Muslim inhabitants of Muslim countries equally enjoyed complete juridical, judicial, and cultural autonomy. Yet, above all, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set a noble example and fully practiced all that he taught to others.

² <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/prophet/profbio.html>

The city of Jerusalem within the conflicted land of Palestine and Israel is a unique religious crossroad unlike any place in history. Over the years, Jerusalem has developed a vital importance that encompasses spiritual, religious, theological, and political meaning. Palestine was the setting that provided a sacred place for the prophets of the Abrahamic faiths. In Palestine, many momentous events occurred. This is the site where Abraham offered up Isaac, the site of the crucifixion of Jesus (PBUH), where Moses brought the people of Israel, and place from which Muhammad (PBUH) ascended to heaven. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have revered this holy setting for many centuries, and for this reason, why conflicts always occur and why peace is never tangible for a long period of time.

It is very difficult to understand how these Abrahamic faiths, which all preach the same ideas and thoughts, are the keys which unlock doors of violence upon mankind today. With billions of people adhering to their respected faiths, it is shameful to look upon them when they all begin to point fingers at one another as the source of hatred in their society. Observing what is happening in the lands of Palestine and Israel poses the question: what would the Prophets say when they see their people acting this way, only fighting one another, killing, and not putting in enough effort to reach a compromise?

Trying to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been for a long time thought of as a difficult task, yet it is not impossible. The goal of the resolution is the creation of an indisputable peace that will appeal to both peoples and will allow them to develop the land without one imposing its will on the other. Steps formed to resolve this disagreement based on the peace teaching of the leaders of the Abrahamic faiths can result in a harmonious conclusion. By understanding and following the methods of their teachings, key developments can be brought about and open up the possibilities of a peaceful settlement between Palestinians and Israelis.

Prophet Moses was diplomatic when he spoke with the Pharaoh, laying out his terms in a gentle manner. Prophet Muhammad, after his Jewish neighbor left trash on his front steps every day, went and asked about his health when he discovered the front of his home bare and clean one morning. Applying these methods and manners in our everyday lives would definitely pose a brighter look on our future as mankind. Although some people may point out that Moses ended up killing the Pharaoh to free his people, that Jesus will come back and fight the people, and that Muhammad had to fight the idol worshippers, to accomplish their goals, they must remember that these prophets resorted to violence as a last means. Has humanity exhausted all its ability to communicate with one another? Many say that what is happening in Palestine – Israel cannot end anytime soon. Whenever a leader, whichever side he or she represents attempts to take a step towards peace, they are assassinated, sometimes by their own people. Yitzhak Rabin is an example. Despite what happens in the actual politics of the situation and ignoring what the leaders are doing, the cameras must be pointed at the future of the conflict, aka the children growing up in this strip of land which has been ravaged by war for so long. It is not impossible for these children to eliminate their barriers and live side by side, for it is already happening. Take a look at the Seeds of Peace organization. It has brought together Israeli and Palestinian teenagers for the duration of about a month to set aside their differences and simply coexist. Coexist is a word that isn't said enough on the tongues of people. The accomplishment of granting piece and coexisting within this ancient city will poses the future of regional peace in the Middle East.

Very often, history repeats itself, and more times than the odds would favor, pacifism is the means that brings about a greater end. An ideal example is Mahatma Gandhi, who used his experiences and determination to change a corrupt world in which he lived in, into a just one.

Learning from the teachings of the prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Peace be Upon Them), and other significant peacemakers, we can gain the knowledge to change the corrupt society in which we live today. Also, making relationships with various peacemakers of our time, will allow the gaining of a diverse and fundamental insight that will cause coexisting. Since each prophet approached his people in different ways so that he can better communicate, we can find our own means of communicating with the conflict occurring in Palestine today. By approaching to both, the Israelis and the Palestinians, in a way that will appeal to each of them, we can be the influence that changes a conflicted society into a peaceful one. With enough hope and will, the concept of achieving peace in Palestine is not far from reach.

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