

# Human Mission and Function in the Torah and the Qur'an: A Comparative Study

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## Abstract

This study undertakes a comparative examination of the Torah and the Holy Qur'an regarding the human being's mission and function in life-the purpose for which God Almighty created humankind. It addresses the identification of the fundamental and original mission entrusted to the human being, as well as points of similarity and difference in both religions, through clarifying key concepts and terminology and analyzing passages from the Torah and the Qur'an that relate to this topic.

The study concludes that, in the Torah, the human mission and function is framed as a particular form of vicegerency assigned to a particular people - "God's chosen people" - which does not support the foundations of building a nation and its civilization. By contrast, in the Holy Qur'an, the human mission and function is represented in realizing vicegerency on earth in its proper form; this constitutes a hallmark of Islamic civilization, a pillar of social life, and a basis for psychological well-being in this world and the hereafter, as well as for social and global peace.

**Keywords:** Mission, Human Being, Function, Torah, Qur'an, Comparison

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## 1. Introduction

The human being is regarded as one of the forces of existence, and this force is expressed in one's life through work, will, faith, righteousness, worship, and activity. These forces likewise produce positive effects in existence when they are connected to sound belief-namely, the oneness of God Almighty. The impact of this belief appears in the role a person fulfills in this life, reflecting one's complete attachment to God Almighty; consequently, it yields its full fruits in the course of events within the framework of the divine law (Sunnah) that applies to all.

The supreme purpose of creating the human being and bringing them into existence is the worship of God Most High and the cultivation of the earth. A person's rank and worth in existence are determined according to the extent to which they realize the mission and function entrusted to them: if they fulfill it, they attain a station that the angels would envy; if they neglect it, they descend to a level below true human dignity.

This article presents a comparative study of the topic of the human being's mission and function in the Torah and the Qur'an, through which the truth that expresses human existence in both scriptures becomes clear, as well as the role the human being plays toward the Creator and His creation, and toward civilization and other systems.

On this basis, the following research problem emerges: What is the human being's fundamental mission in this life, and what is the function entrusted to them-the purpose for which God, Glorified and Exalted, created them?

To analyze this problem, we propose the following subsidiary questions:

- How does Jewish law address the human being's mission and function through the texts of the Torah?
- What is the human being's fundamental mission and function in the verses of the Holy Qur'an?
- What are the most important points of similarity and difference between the two religious laws?

## Study Methodology

To address the research problem in all its aspects and to consider all its dimensions, this study employs the descriptive method to define and clarify the concepts and terminology relevant to the research issues. It also uses content analysis and a critical approach to the texts of the Torah and the Qur'an in order to elicit the various meanings related to the human being's mission and function, and to analyze and critique them. In addition, the comparative method is applied throughout the different stages of the study to highlight the key points of similarity and difference in this field.

## Study Objectives and Scope

This study aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the ultimate and supreme purpose behind the creation of the human being and the goal of human existence on this earth. This

is pursued through reviewing, explaining, and interpreting relevant texts in both religious traditions, and examining the extent to which each religion addresses this topic, while also presenting points of similarity and difference between the two sources.

In accordance with the approved research plan for completing this work-and so as not to impose additional expectations beyond its intended aims-the scope of this study, in terms of both subject matter and methodology, is limited to examining similarities and differences concerning the creation of the human being and the overarching purpose of human existence. This is done by analyzing selected books of the Torah (the Old Testament), relying in particular on passages from the Book of Genesis, as well as selected surahs and verses from the Qur'an, with a stronger focus on verses from Surat al-Baqarah.

### Previous Studies

Below are some studies that have addressed this topic:

- Study (Lamir, 2005): *The Relationship Between the Human Being and God in the Qur'an, the Torah, and the Gospel*, Prince Abdelkader University, Constantine, Algeria.

This study examines the ultimate purpose of the creation and existence of the human being. It argues that the human-God relationship in the three revealed scriptures (the Qur'an, the Torah, and the Gospel) revolves around monotheism, worship, and obedience to God's commands. It notes that the Qur'an emphasizes absolute servitude and mercy, the Torah emphasizes covenant and law, and the Gospel emphasizes love and spirituality. The three scriptures share a call to faith, righteous deeds, and repentance.

- Study (Ben-Sheikh, 2006): *The Question of Creation in the Holy Qur'an: A Comparative Study with Modern Scientific Theories*.

This study concludes that vicegerency (khilāfah) represents the performance and function assigned to the human being-namely, worshiping the Creator through obedience and observing His rulings with regard to the self, the body, the family, children, and the surrounding environment. Vicegerency thus expresses a relationship between the human being and God Almighty, who appointed the human as vicegerent, and also a relationship between the human vicegerent and everything that God Almighty has placed under their stewardship on earth. This mission, which God assigned to the human being and made the purpose of human existence, is founded on a central element: acting as a representative on behalf of God; from this element it derives its essence and all its dimensions.

## 2. The Human Being's Function in the Torah

In this section, we discuss the human being's mission and function in Judaism through its primary source, the Torah. I have divided it into two parts: the first concerns obedience

and adherence to the commandments and the Law, and the second concerns the existential function.

## 2.1. Obedience and Adherence to the Commandments and the Law

We can infer this function through a historical trajectory reflected in the books of the Torah, namely the selection of one nation to the exclusion of others. This nation becomes a distinct people for the worship of God: “You are the children of the LORD your God... For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (**Deuteronomy 14:1-2**). Likewise: “Is he not your Father, who created you... Remember the days of old... When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance... He fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage...” (**Deuteronomy 32:6-12**).

Insofar as this distinctiveness is effected and chosen by the Lord, it also appears in a Jewish desire to be exclusively associated with God in contrast to other peoples (as though it were a special vicegerency on behalf of God restricted to one people). This is tied, within Jewish doctrinal thought, to a historical covenant between God and the Jews, traced back to Abraham-whom Jews regard as their first father-and then to his descendants. God promised him to multiply his offspring: “And I will make of you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (**Genesis 12:2-3**). He also granted him the land extending from the Nile to the Euphrates: “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’” (**Genesis 15:18**).

From here, we observe a historical course as if God were preparing the way for a particular people (the Jewish human being). Thus emerged the notion of a national deity and a nation-defined conception of humanity. In short, this trajectory makes it clear that the Jewish human being’s relationship with God is construed within a narrow local-national framework that pertains to the Jewish person alone.

Because this human-divine particularity is specified for a certain group (the Jews), the relationship between the Jewish human being and God becomes especially prominent, as expressed in the first covenant with the patriarch Abraham: “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you... all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God” (**Genesis 17:7-8**).

In return for this promise, each generation is required to uphold the Lord’s covenant. From this, we can shed light on the Jewish human being’s function and relationship with God through obedience to the Lord. Here we limit ourselves to one model: the Ten Commandments.

### a. Commitment to the commandments

To realize this function, these commandments urge obedience to the Lord and adherence to His law and ordinances: “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... if you love the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments...” (cf. *Deuteronomy 30:15-16*). Likewise: “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations...” (*Genesis 17:9*).

Given the importance and gravity of this obligation in Jewish life, it appears repeatedly in the Torah, from Exodus to Deuteronomy; its repetition in Deuteronomy emphasizes the necessity of commitment to it. This establishes a reciprocal love between the Jewish human being and God, and the Jewish person must preserve this law as an expression of obedience and worship-the practical path by which love is declared (Antonius Commentary, 2005, *Deuteronomy*, p. 2).

In essence, these commandments constitute a call to obedience and embody the human-God relationship; that relationship is realized through adherence to them. The Torah’s presentation of the Ten Commandments includes a set of rulings through which we may derive the Jewish human being’s mission and function toward the Creator and toward others: “And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt... You shall have no other gods before me... Remember the Sabbath day... Honor your father and your mother... You shall not murder... You shall not commit adultery... You shall not steal... You shall not bear false witness... You shall not covet...’” (*Exodus 20:1-17*).

Through these commandments, the Jewish human being’s function encompasses multiple relationships, including faith in God and the rejection of associating partners with Him (the Jewish person’s relationship with the Lord). The opening declaration-“I am the LORD your God”-frames this commitment (*Exodus 20:2*). The function implied here is belief in a particular covenantal God, as in the promise to Abraham: “to be God to you and to your offspring after you” (*Genesis 17:7*). The following prohibition-“You shall have no other gods before me... You shall not make for yourself a carved image...” - reinforces this (*Exodus 20:3-4*).

### b. Adherence to the Law

The Torah also contains rulings related to the Law that the Jewish human being must observe in order to fulfill obedience, and to be distinguished from other nations and peoples: “That he may establish you today as a people for himself, and that he may be your God, as he promised you” (*Deuteronomy 29:13*).

Accordingly, the Jewish human being’s relationship with God is articulated through embodying and enacting His rulings and commandments, and by preserving the covenant and charter-associated with empowerment in the land, victory over enemies, and honor above other peoples (Lamir, 2005, p. 85). This is further emphasized through exhortations to learn and abide by the law: “Be careful to do them... do not turn aside to

the right hand or to the left... that you may live..." (cf. *Deuteronomy 5:32-33*). Thus, the role indicated here is that the Jewish human being is required to reinforce this bond through following and obedience: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (*Ecclesiastes 12:13*).

### c. Preserving unity

By reflecting on this model of adherence to the commandments, another relationship becomes apparent: the relationship of the Jewish person with fellow Jews. Commitment to the commandments encompasses public worship as well as social life: "You shall not murder... You shall not commit adultery... You shall not steal..." This constitutes a formative model for Jewish solidarity (Jew with Jew). The purpose of these commandments and directives is to guide the community toward holiness and to regulate each individual within it through a distinct mode of life that differentiates them from others (Lamir, 2005, pp. 85-86). From this, it appears that this relationship is framed primarily within the Jewish community, whereas relations with others are treated differently-since this model establishes a pattern centered on ethnic unity (continual reflection on the commandments) (Group of Researchers, 2003, p. 367).

## 2.2. The Existential Function

In the Torah, the existential function revolves around defining the purpose of the human being and human existence through a covenantal relationship with the Lord. This is reflected in the following points:

### a. Establishing the kingdom and empowerment on earth

The human being's relationship to the land is framed through establishing the promised kingdom-something we have already observed in the issue of election/chosenness. Some Torah texts indicate adherence to the law in exchange for the land. This law, in this view, is for the chosen elite-the chosen people-such that the chosen person can only realize this status by abiding by the terms of the covenant with the Lord, foremost among which is keeping the commandments. Since the superiority of the Jewish human being is conditioned upon commitment to commandments and ordinances in return for the land, the role of obedience to the Lord aims-ultimately-at a lofty function. The Jewish person's sole role in existence on earth is presented as taking control of it and subjugating other human beings (Toda-Nuzul, 2004, p. 9).

It is evident that this idea reflects other particularities, namely dominion over the world through the establishment of the promised kingdom. This idea is grounded in the covenant between God and the Jewish human being; and in order to affirm the Jewish people's right to the land of Palestine, it became an inseparable part of Jewish belief "forever": "And I will give to you... the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God" (*Genesis 17:8*). Likewise: "Go from

your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" ([Genesis 12:1](#)).

The sanctity of the land has occupied a large space in Jewish religious thought as closely tied to Jewish religious texts, from which the sanctification of the land emerged. The land is considered a core element of Jewish doctrine due to its connection with the deity "YHWH." The relationship of the Jewish people to God and to the land is intimate and intertwined: the human being is connected to God through worship, rituals, and rites, which in turn are tied to the land. Together they form a sacred unity in which neither is separable from the other. Jewish religious thought thus endowed the land of Palestine with holiness, describing it as the promised land (the land of sacred sites). In this way, the land becomes one of the most important pillars of Jewish thought, as it represents a fundamental factor in the revival of Jews in Palestine-because the people are viewed as an organic entity that can only rise in its own land, bound to it by a permanent and strong organic bond. The rebirth of the people's spirit, in this view, cannot be realized elsewhere. Among the clearest indications cited are references connected to the modern independence of Israel, which underscores the centrality of land as a religious doctrine for Jews ([Bou-Draa, 2005, p. 52](#)).

Many contemporary researchers have argued that the revival of these concepts by Jews serves a political assumption-namely, control of the world. In this regard, Saber Ta'miyyah states: "The most important goal is not to unite all the Jews of the world in a single caravan and end the discord that tears their unity; rather, the goal is far broader than that, for it in fact aims to enable the Jews to monopolize rule over the world and its fruits, because they are God's chosen people" ([Toda-Nuzul, 2004, p. 74](#)).

#### **b. The sanctity of the Jewish people**

The first thing the Jewish person believes, based on what precedes, is that they are a holy people: "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God... the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession... It was not because you were more in number... but because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath... Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love... to a thousand generations" ([Deuteronomy 7:6-9](#)).

#### **c. Exclusivity and the mirage of distinction**

The Torah texts clearly reinforce the superiority of Jews and their distinction from others as God's chosen people. Their "spirits" are portrayed as distinct from the rest of creation, while the spirits of non-Jews are likened to animals. Religious rituals also contribute to consolidating this notion: the concluding portion of the Jewish daytime prayer praises God for not creating the worshipper like the nations of other lands. Thus, meanings of exclusivity revolve around exclusivity with God, the

particularity of their people, and their distinct lineage affiliation (Ali, 2002, p. 24). As noted earlier, the Jewish person thanks God for choosing them and for giving them the Torah as a mark of distinction. Many rabbis, jurists, and thinkers attempted to revise the idea of chosenness through various interpretations; however, regardless of interpretive content, the idea of election in general reinforces a logic of separation and isolation from others (as an expression of holiness resulting from a particular divine-Jewish linkage). They interpret chosenness as preference for the stronger and the fitter (Al-Messiri, 1999, p. 418).

#### d. Contempt for the Other

Rituals and commandments are deeply linked to a particular destiny-the Jewish person's relationship with God. The Ten Commandments, as a model, indicate multiple relational roles: the first set includes prohibitions, and the other relates to the Jewish person's relationship with others, all under the rubric of obedience to the Lord (Bou-Haloufa, 2005, p. 26). However, these are presented as applying to the Jew only; regarding non-Jews, it is claimed that a Jewish person may deceive or steal from them and take their property, and that it is forbidden to rescue a non-Jew from destruction or help them out of a pit into which they fall-since the Jewish person regards the other as a disbeliever regardless of the god they worship. It is as though the Jewish person's function is reduced to securing interests only. Supporting this relationship of "distinction" and "contempt for the other," it is noted that the Ten Commandments say: "You shall not murder... you shall not steal... you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor... you shall not covet your neighbor's house... your neighbor's wife..." Yet the Jewish person, in this depiction, is permitted to infringe upon others' belongings because they believe that whatever others possess is, in fact, theirs (Morsi, 2001, p. 41).

It is clear that this idea is deeply rooted in the earlier foundations whereby the Jewish person sees themselves as superior to other peoples ("chosenness"). Torah texts explicitly emphasize that they are God's chosen people. The deity is not described as choosing the Jew merely as an individual human being, but rather as choosing them as a national-religious community unified by ideas and beliefs. Chosenness is also taken to indicate ethnic superiority: Abraham was chosen for his purity, and the Jews were chosen because they are of his lineage (Al-Messiri, 1999, pp. 18-24). The deity is also said to have chosen the Jews for moral superiority so that He might have a servant among the nations. From this, a racial tendency toward other peoples becomes apparent in the discourse of the "chosen people," as in Deuteronomy: "Blessed shall you be above all peoples." Accordingly, the Jewish person views people as two categories:

1. Jews: God's chosen people-His children and beloved; worship is accepted only from them; their souls are created from God's own essence; they alone are His pure children, and God has honored them by granting the human form (Asfour, 1994, p. 23). The Jewish person also views the law as revealed only to them; hence religious

fanaticism developed around a law considered exclusive to them because they are the chosen people (Zaza, 1999, p. 47). Thus, in light of the preceding analyses, the relationship with the Other appears absent.

2. **Gentiles (Goyim):** They are depicted as created from a “satanic clay,” and their purpose of creation is to serve the Jews. They were not granted the human form except after the precedence of Jews to facilitate interaction between the two groups as an honor to the Jews. Jews are the origin of humanity, while others are followers within it; Jews may treat them like animals-killing them, stealing from them, violating their honor, dealing with them through usury, and deceiving them (Asfour, 1994, p. 23).

### 3. The Human Being’s Mission and Function in the Holy Qur’an

In this section, we address the human being’s mission and function through the Holy Qur’an, which is divided into two parts: the first is the realization of vicegerency (*khilāfah*), and the second is the devotional (worship-based) function.

#### 3.1. Realizing Vicegerency (the Existential Mission)

##### a. Vicegerency in the linguistic sense

The root is *khalafa*. The letters *khā’*, *lām*, and *fā’* form three principal meanings: (1) that something comes after something else and takes its place; (2) “behind” as the opposite of “in front”; and (3) change, as in their saying “his mouth changed” (*khalafa fāhu*) when it altered. The first sense-*khalaf*-means what comes after. *Khilāfah* was called *khilāfah* because the second comes after the first (Ibn-Faris, 1979, p. 210).

*Khilāfah* also means deputation and agency on behalf of another-either because the one deputized for is absent, deceased, incapable, or as an honor granted to the one appointed as vicegerent (Al-Fayruzabadi, 1996, vol. 3, p. 562). Ibn al-Anbārī states that the original form of *khalīfah* is *khalīf*, and *khalā’if* is the plural of *khalīfah*, while *khulafā’* is the plural of *khalīf* (Ibn-Manzur, 1994, p. 1235).

When we say that *khilāfah* in language means deputation and agency, then when deputation and agency take place between two people, for example, they require several key elements in order to be established: the one who commissions (*al-muwakkil*), the agent (*al-wakīl*), the subject of agency, the conditions of agency, the duration of agency, and accountability at the end of the agency. These relationships exist in the reality of vicegerency: the One who appoints the vicegerent (with *kasrah* on the *mīm* in Arabic usage) is God Almighty; the one appointed as vicegerent (with *fathah* on the *mīm*) is the human being; the object over which vicegerency is exercised is the earth; the conditions of vicegerency are moral responsibility (*taklīf*) and the heavenly message; the foundation of these conditions is obedience; the duration of vicegerency is life; and the accountability is the Day of Judgment (Desouky, 1998, p. 12).

## b. Vicegerency in the technical/terminological sense

Vicegerency on behalf of God Most High means implementing His will on earth and applying His rulings therein. This entails that the human being becomes an authority in the universe for the purpose of carrying out the mission assigned by the One who appointed the vicegerent-God Almighty-by obeying what He commands and refraining from what He forbids. Adam is the vicegerent, and his vicegerency consists in executing God's will (Ibn-Ashur, 1984, p. 399). God says: "And [mention] when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will place upon the earth a vicegerent.'" (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:30).

Here, vicegerency appears as an intended purpose in the creation of the human being. Exegetes have offered multiple views: some said that human beings are successors to those who preceded them in inhabiting the earth, such as angels and jinn; others said it is vicegerency on behalf of God. These understandings can be derived from the indications of the texts. In any case, the concept is directed to the human being through commands and prohibitions, and all meanings converge on the idea that vicegerency is the performance and function entrusted to the human being-namely, worshiping the Creator through obedience and observing His rulings regarding the self, the body, family, children, and the surrounding environment (Bou-Draa, 2005, p. 237).

Thus, vicegerency expresses a relationship between the human being and God Almighty, who appointed them as vicegerent, on the one hand; and also a relationship between the human vicegerent and everything that God Almighty has entrusted to them on earth, on the other. This mission, which God assigned to the human being and made the purpose of human existence, is founded upon an essential element: acting as God's representative; from this element it derives its essence and all its dimensions.

The first relationship-between the human being and everything over which God has granted them stewardship-shows that the human mission in this life includes many meanings and matters that constitute the face of vicegerency, centered on the human being's mission to cultivate and develop the universe. Since the human being is, by nature, composed of a spiritual element and an earthly, material element, growth and ascent toward God encompasses both dimensions. Therefore, God prepared the arena of perfection and moral-spiritual ascent to suit this dual nature, and the earth became the field for practicing vicegerency (Al-Najjar, 1987, p. 49).

Practicing vicegerency on earth is one of the objectives of human creation. It is a path to developing the human self and completing it through the method of worship, which requires dealing with the earth in a way that leads the human being to take it as a path toward magnifying God, venerating Him, submitting to Him, seeking His love, and attaining His pleasure-through reflection and contemplation of its states. It also requires investing in it, benefitting from it, and harnessing its facilities by discovering its secrets and laws (Al-Najjar, 1987, p. 49).

A reader of God's Book will find that God created everything with wisdom. Benefiting from resources and harnessing them to serve the human being includes, first, human

mastery through human agency-an agency that enables expanding the scope of action, reinforcing, consolidating, and strengthening effectiveness. Thus God says: “And He taught Adam the names-all of them.” (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:31).

Teaching the names constitutes a basic component, because knowledge is essentially knowing the properties of things and their laws. When the human being knows the nature of a thing, they can harness it and benefit from it. The second aspect concerns the nature of earthly things and living beings-namely, that God Almighty has subjected them for human benefit (Desouky, 1998, p. 17). God says: “He brought you forth from the earth and established you upon it [to cultivate it]; so seek His forgiveness, then turn to Him in repentance.” (Sūrat Hūd, 11:61).

The word *ista‘marakum*-with *sīn* and *tā’*-indicates, in Arabic usage, requesting: that is, He requested of you to cultivate the earth. Thus, cultivating the earth is a face of vicegerency. Vicegerency is not realized except by confining one’s mission and effort to drawing near to God Almighty; and cultivating the earth can only be through persistent work and upright striving. God says: “O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet Him.” (Sūrat al-Inshiqāq, 84:6).

For God’s subjecting of earthly things and living beings is a subjecting that is conditioned upon the human being’s use of their agency, through which they act upon it (Desouky, 1998, p. 435). God says: “Allah has promised those who believe among you and do righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (*istikhlāf*) upon the earth... They worship Me and do not associate anything with Me.” (Sūrat al-Nūr, 24:55). Thus, the succession promised by God is conditioned upon faith and righteous action (Zaydan, 1994, p. 179).

Cultivating the earth falls within vicegerency, and both are a form of worship of God Most High. For this purpose, three basic means were provided:

### **b. 1. Subjection (Taskhīr)**

The relationship between the human being and the universe is a relationship of *taskhīr* (subjection), which represents a cosmic manifestation of worship. *Taskhīr* means that God enabled the human being to use aspects of the universe in beneficial practical applications across different areas of life (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 124). It has also been defined as God’s making the universe manageable in service of the human being without compensation, so that the servant may arrive at monotheism and gratitude (Kamal, 2006, p. 45).

The concept of *taskhīr* is emphasized repeatedly in the Qur’an: the universe has been subjected for the human being, and this is a divine blessing-because the human being is God’s creation and has a role and standing in existence; God honored them: “And We have certainly honored the children of Adam...” (Sūrat al-Isrā’, 17:70).

God’s wisdom required that, in honoring the human being and securing good for them, He subjected the creatures and blessings of the universe for their sake: water, air, animals, plants, inanimate matter, the sky and the earth, the moon, night, and day (Salama, 1998, p. 238).

Qur'anic verses indicating this are many. God says: "It is He who created for you all that is on the earth." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:29). He also says: "Allah is the One who created the heavens and the earth... and subjected for you the ships... and subjected for you the rivers... and subjected for you the sun and the moon... and subjected for you the night and the day." (*Sūrat Ibrāhīm*, 14:32-34).

From these noble verses we understand that God has spread out and prepared the resources of the universe for human benefit; nothing among them becomes insurmountable if its means are made accessible and God's laws within it are observed. This implies that the human being has a "right" over them in the broad sense: the authority to scientifically investigate their properties and secrets, and the authority to benefit from their material realities in building life, serving creation, and cultivating the universe. God determined dimensions, laws, and measures in a way that fits the mission-namely, the human being's vicegerency on earth-and corresponds to their capacity for a positive, effective civilizational engagement with nature. This is encompassed by His saying: "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth." (*Sūrat al-Jāthiyah*, 45:13). The universe does not serve the human being "for free" unless the human being understands how to direct action toward its phenomena and components; directing action requires knowledge of the laws that govern these components. God created this universe to serve the human being (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 121). This, in turn, reflects goals of knowing God Almighty, prompting obedience and preserving humanity through its continuity and survival (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 128).

The universe around us-its water, air, seas, rivers, and so forth-has been subjected to the human being; thus, they should benefit from it. This constitutes a doctrinal pattern in the human-universe relationship-elevation, unity, and subjection-containing a divine purpose for the human being: preparing them to engage the universe in a way that fulfills the function for which they were created-"cultivation," which is one form of "worship" (Al-Najjar, 1987, p. 43). Cultivation is one of the aims and fruits of this subjection: the continued survival of the human species and enjoyment of God's blessings (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 125).

The verses are numerous, detailing what suits the human constitution in existence. God says: "And We sent down from the sky water and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you; so do not set up rivals to Allah while you know." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:22).

The verses speak about the necessities of human life (fruits as sustenance). Other verses clarify the importance of other elements known to be essential for the life of all living beings (including the human being). God says: "And [in] what Allah has sent down from the sky of water and given life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness... and [in] the directing of the winds and the clouds subjected between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:164). Elsewhere, in explaining God's blessings, He says: "[He] made for you the earth as a resting place and the sky as a canopy and sent down from the sky water and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:22).

We therefore reach the conclusion that this *taskhīr* is God's mercy upon His servants and should be met with gratitude. Gratitude is to believe in its Source and to use these subjected resources in what benefits creation and cultivates the earth-on the condition that God's laws governing them are observed-so that the ultimate goal may be realized: fulfilling vicegerency. God says: "O you who have believed, eat of the good things We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him that you worship." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:172). Thus, thanking a blessing means using these subjected resources in what Allah loves and approves, because the human being's relationship with the universe is ultimately a relationship of servitude-and this is what we observe through the role played by the aim of this subjection, as follows:

**The epistemic objective:** This refers to knowing God Almighty through the universe and its subjection to human use. Such knowledge is pursued through engaging with the cosmos and investing in it. Human beings were created to realize vicegerency (*khilāfah*) on earth, and this vicegerency is not fulfilled except through worship-worship that encompasses faith and the practice of cultivating and developing the earth (*'imārah*). Through this practice, the governing laws of the universe are discovered, and these, in turn, lead to knowledge of God Most High.

**The human objective:** This denotes discovering the natural laws that safeguard the continuity of the human species and enable the enjoyment of God's blessings. Here, *'imārah* (civilizational development and the cultivation of the earth) enters as one of the aims of this subjection.

The social objective refers to discovering the social laws that preserve the survival and continuity of nations. These objectives form an orderly, coherent progression whose culminating point is gratitude to God Most High, obedience to Him, and worship of Him (Kamal, 2006, p. 45).

**b.2. Balance:** For the human being to realize the full dimension of cultivating the universe, they must avoid any harm, corruption, or waste that would undermine the reform of the earth and its development and would hinder the transformation of human reality and life in general (Al-Shaybani, 1987, p. 267). God Most High says: "Do not cause (corruption) on the earth after it has been set right; that is better for you, if you are believers." (*Sūrat al-A'raf*, 7:85). The concept of balance means preserving the elements of the earth in the state in which God created them, without introducing any fundamental disruption. If any deficiency occurs in these elements, the earth may no longer be able to meet human requirements for *'imārah*. God Most High says: "He created everything and determined it with precise determination." (*Sūrat al-Furqān*, 25:2). He also says: "Indeed, We have created everything according to a measure." (*Sūrat al-Qamar*, 54:49).

This pertains, on the one hand, to the human being's relationship with the universe; and it also includes the relationship of human beings with one another as individuals and as a community. Islam balances these two dimensions-the individual and the social-since *fiṭrah*

(sound human nature) is not rectified by one without the other. The individual is naturally and practically bound to the community: they care for society's affairs, pursue its interests, cooperate with its members, and prefer others over themselves. God Most High says: "And cooperate in righteousness and piety." (Sūrat al-Mā'idah, 5:2). Thus, within Islamic belief, the human being is balanced in their inclination toward the community; through this balance between the two dimensions, they can realize their individual existence by developing their capacities, and realize their social existence by cultivating the universe, seeking thereby the pleasure of God Most High, manifested in fulfilling vicegerency-worship and *'imārah* (Noaman, 2004, p. 344).

**b.3. Beauty:** Balance itself is part of the beauty that God has placed in this universe; God created the cosmos so that it would be beautiful. God Most High says: "[He is] the One who perfected everything He created." (Sūrat al-Sajdah, 32:7). This leads to resisting injustice, oppression, and corruption. God Most High says: "And if Allah did not repel some people by means of others, the earth would surely be corrupted; but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:251). That is, were it not for the repelling of those who perpetrate evil and corruption, the earth would be corrupted, its benefits would vanish, and its essential interests-such as cultivation and progeny-would be disrupted, and so forth (Abu Al-Saud, 1981, p. 245).

Among what also falls within the concept of human vicegerency on earth is the temporary nature of this appointment. This is one of the features of usufruct (the right of use), and the Qur'an indicates this temporal limitation. God Most High says: "And for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:36).

This temporal limitation helps regulate human conduct in dealing with the earth and its resources, since these resources are not the property of one generation rather than another; they belong also to coming generations. This entails preserving them and avoiding extravagance and injustice so that they may be inherited intact-capable of production and renewal-for subsequent generations (Ghallab, 2005, p. 296).

From here, the wisdom of God Almighty in creating the human being and the universe becomes manifest: existence is not in vain, for vanity and the absence of wisdom contradict His perfection, and His will and acts are exalted above such deficiency. The emergence of the human being and life on this earth was not a passing accident; rather, it was established through decisive intent and wise planning for the first relationship between the human being and that over which God has entrusted them-expressed in human control, stewardship, utilization, and governance over all things. The human being is thus granted mastery over it; yet even in exercising this mastery on earth, the human being must observe another dimension in order to realize the meaning of vicegerency-namely, the second relationship between the human being and their Creator, Glorified and Exalted: servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*).

## 3.2. The Devotional Function (Worship)

Islam begins by acquainting the human being with the truth of the self so that one does not become tyrannical or wrong oneself or those around them. Accordingly, God requires the human being to realize servitude (‘ubūdiyyah) (Al-Shaybani, 1987, p. 262). Servitude encompasses interrelated relationships (creation, the universe, the human being, life, and the Hereafter), and the axis of all these relationships is ‘ubūdiyyah, from which they derive their spirit and practical expressions. The first of these relationships is the human being’s relationship with the Creator-namely, worship.

### 3.2.1. The Concept of Worship

#### a. Linguistically

In Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ, ‘ibādah (worship) is defined as submission and humility; worship is obedience, and ta‘abbud denotes devotion/ascetic practice (Al-Razi, 1981, p. 408). In Lisān al-‘Arab, a range of lexical derivatives is given, including the sense of being made lowly or subdued (al-ma‘bad = that which is humbled), and ta‘abbud as self-abasement; the muta‘abbid is one who devotes themselves exclusively to worship, and related usages are also noted (Ibn-Manzur, 1994, p. 2778). Ibn Fāris indicates that the form “‘abada-ya‘budu ‘ibādatan” is not used except with respect to worshipping God Most High, and from it come “ta‘abbada-yata‘abbadu” (Ibn-Faris, 1979, vol. 4, p. 205). Worship is obedience that none deserves except the One who possesses ultimate beneficence-namely, God Most High. Worship is of two kinds: worship by compulsion/subjection (taskhīr) and worship by choice, which pertains to rational beings (Al-Fayruzabadi, 1996, p. 8). This is what is commanded in His saying: “Worship your Lord.” (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:21).

#### b. Terminologically

Worship is an inclusive term for everything that God loves and is pleased with, whether outward or inward, whether actions or statements (Ibn-Taymiyyah, 2002, p. 27). Hence, the human being’s perfection and closeness to God Almighty can only be realized through the method of worship. For this reason, God says: “And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me.” (Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt, 51:56).

Worshipping God and complete servitude to Him means turning one’s whole being to God Most High, submitting to His majesty, and yielding unconditionally to Him as the absolute (the One possessing ultimate right) over His creation-so that no one owns anything independently of His authority. It also entails affirming God’s absolute divinity and the human being’s absolute servitude; directing oneself to Him with sincere intention in all matters; following the path He has laid down for His servants across different affairs; and continually receiving guidance from Him in order to regulate and direct one’s actions along their correct paths. It includes establishing the obligations and religious rites God has prescribed, complying with His commands and avoiding His prohibitions, enjoining the good He commanded and called to, and forbidding the evil He prohibited and rejected-along with other matters and meanings encompassed by worship. In its comprehensive,

expansive sense, worship goes beyond merely performing ritual acts to include all aspects of life and all dimensions of the human being and their conduct: thoughts, feelings, aims, hopes, works, and efforts undertaken with the intention of attaining God's pleasure, complying with His commands, seeking obedience to Him, and realizing goodness and happiness in this world and the Hereafter (Al-Shaybani, 1987, p. 262).

Indeed, one who reflects on this universe in which we live observes that everything within it lives and functions for something else: water serves the earth; the earth serves plants; plants serve animals; animals serve the human being-so for whom, then, is the human being? The answer proclaimed by sound human nature (*fiṭrah*) and expressed by the order of beings in this universe is: the human being is for God-worshiping Him and fulfilling His right. From here the relationship between the human being and their Lord is defined as worship. God says: "O people, worship your Lord." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:21).

### 3.2.2. Manifestations of Worship

The manifestations of worship are numerous and diverse. They can be summarized as follows:

#### a. The ritual manifestation

This is expressed through rites and practices that symbolize forms of love and obedience. Worship thus consists of commands and prohibitions: commands are grounded in desire and the aspiration to attain what is commanded, whereas prohibitions are grounded in reverence and awe toward the One who is revered. If one loves God Almighty, one desires what is with Him, longs to draw near to Him, and seeks the path that leads to Him; and if one venerates Him, one fears Him and fulfills obedience to Him in the most complete manner (Ibn-Taymiyyah, 1998, p. 16). God Most High says: "Yes-whoever submits his face to Allah while being a doer of good, then for him is his reward with his Lord, and no fear will be upon them, nor will they grieve." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:112). Religious rites are varied-such as establishing prayer and other acts. God says: "Establish prayer and give zakāh." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:43). He also says: "O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer; indeed, Allah is with the patient." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:153). This extends to other religious observances encompassed by His saying: "Those to whom We have given the Book recite it with its true recitation." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:121). Reciting the Book, in this sense, means following it and acting upon it; and following the Book includes the various rites-fasting, prayer, and the like-when the aim is the pleasure of God Almighty (Ibn-Taymiyyah, 2002, p. 50).

#### b. The social manifestation

Its subject matter is values, customs, traditions, and social systems. From this follows the study of human society, the succession of civilizations, and the discovery of their laws, relations, and resulting outcomes-since all of this guides

toward knowledge of God, and toward understanding the effects of nearness to Him and distance from Him.

### c. The cosmic manifestation

Its subject matter is the works and efforts of the human being that disclose the magnificence of God's craftsmanship and power: knowledge of the precision of divine creation in creatures, the multiplicity of their kinds, the diversity of their states, and the abundance of God's bounty as realized through benefit and use. All of these manifestations constitute righteous action that falls within the comprehensive meaning of worship. They must not be separated-i.e., separating word from deed-because "word" represents the religious/ritual dimension of worship, whereas "deed" is its application, which enters within the social and cosmic manifestations (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 88).

To prevent imbalance, these dimensions must be integrated so that error does not occur-for example, interpreting cosmic phenomena through mythic explanations unrelated to human society and the cosmic manifestation. God says: "They ask you about the new moons; say: they are measurements of time for people and for ḥajj." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:189). The Qur'an also repudiated strange innovations such as entering houses from their backs during pilgrimage rather than through their doors: "Righteousness is not that you enter houses from their backs, but righteousness is [in] one who is mindful of Allah. And enter houses from their doors, and be mindful of Allah that you may succeed." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:189).

The integration of these manifestations yields the fruit of worship. An example of integrating the ritual and social manifestations is God's saying: "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [that of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day... and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy... and establishes prayer and gives zakāh... Those are the ones who have been true, and those are the God-fearing." (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:177). The integration of the ritual manifestation with the cosmic manifestation is seen in His saying: "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for those of understanding... who remember Allah... and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth..." (*Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, 3:190-191).

As indicated in the aforementioned verse from *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, al-birr (righteousness) is an inclusive term for all noble virtues (Al-Tabari, 1978, p. 55). It is not merely bodily movements oriented toward the qiblah, nor self-deception through limiting oneself to ritual performance; rather, righteousness is sound faith and sincere, comprehensive worship in which other applications are integrated-namely, a social order grounded in elevated ethics and patience in bearing the burdens of struggle and work (Al-Tabari, 1978, pp. 55-56).

Accordingly, all of these forms fall within the substance of worship. The relationship of worship remains the primary means that satisfies the human need for permanence and meaning: it softens the reality of death, strips it of the aura of dread and anxiety, and

presents it as a link within the chain of human development. It also fulfills the need for belonging by making belonging to God alone; and it meets the need for respect as well as subsidiary needs, including biological needs, the need for security, the need for knowledge, and the elimination of ignorance, and so forth (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 100).

As for the second relationship-between the human being and the universe-it is derived from the human being's relationship with God (the relationship of servitude). It constitutes an application of the "cosmic manifestation" of worship and one of the means of realizing the first component of worship: perfect love that leads to complete obedience to God. This dimension has already been treated in the human mission of cultivating the universe (*imārah*). Likewise, the human being's relationship with other human beings is the practical application of servitude, manifested in justice (*ʿadl*) and beneficence (*ihsān*). The general framework governing this relationship is God's saying: "Indeed, Allah commands justice and beneficence." (Sūrat al-Naḥl, 16:90). Justice represents the minimum standard of human-to-human relations; one must maintain this limit and beware of falling below it.

Justice operates in concentric circles according to human belonging. At the level of the self, God says: "O you who believe, be persistently standing firm in justice." (Sūrat al-Nisā', 4:135). Next is the circle of family and kinship: "But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one." (Sūrat al-Nisā', 4:3). And: "And when you speak, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative." (Sūrat al-An'ām, 6:152). Then comes the circle of the community to which the person belongs: "And if two groups of believers fight, then reconcile between them... and reconcile between them with justice and act equitably; indeed, Allah loves those who act equitably." (Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt, 49:9). Finally comes the circle of humanity at large: "And when you judge between people, judge with justice." (Sūrat al-Nisā', 4:58).

Justice is therefore required across all these circles in all circumstances, for the entrenchment of justice is a marker of civilizational progress and intellectual maturity, whereas its absence results in both intellectual and civilizational decline (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 144).

As for beneficence (*ihsān*), it is the natural relationship that should bind human beings to one another. God says: "Worship none but Allah, and be good to parents, and to relatives, and to orphans, and to the needy, and speak good to people..." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:83). Beneficence is required especially when the human-to-human relationship is direct and close, since it is the bond that gathers all parties together. Hence, divine warning to the charitable not to invalidate their beneficence through reproach or harm, and directing them to seek reward from God directly: "O you who believe, do not nullify your charities with reminders of generosity or with harm." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:264). And: "Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow what they spent with reproach or harm- for them is their reward with their Lord, and no fear will be upon them, nor will they grieve." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:262).

The Qur'an further specifies the arenas in which beneficence should be manifest. God says: "And [remember] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel: 'Worship

none but Allah, and be good to parents, and to relatives, and to orphans, and to the needy, and speak good to people, and establish prayer and give zakāh'..." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:83). Thus, beneficence is required at all times and in all situations:

- In confronting hardships: "So whoever is pardoned by his brother for anything, then follow-up should be according to what is right and payment to him with good conduct." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:178).
- In intellectual dialogue: "And tell My servants to say that which is best." (Sūrat al-Isrā', 17:53).
- In family bonds: "Divorce is twice; then [after that] either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with good conduct." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:229).
- In public policy and economic relations: "And seek, through what Allah has given you, the Home of the Hereafter... and do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek corruption in the land..." (Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:77). And: "Spend in the way of Allah and do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction; and do good-indeed, Allah loves the doers of good." (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:195). In this way, human life is sustained and yields its positive fruit in realizing servitude.

As for the human being's relationship with life, it is a relationship of trial (*ibtilae*). Trial is the practical manifestation of the servitude relationship between God and the human being, suitable to the stage of permanence and full recompense. The Qur'anic reference to these elements appears in His saying: "And those who are patient, seeking the countenance of their Lord, and establish prayer, and spend from what We have provided them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good-those will have the best outcome of the Home." (Sūrat al-Ra'd, 13:22). The forms of this trial are of two kinds: the first includes test-materials that the Qur'an places under the heading of "good," "good deeds," or "ease"; and the second includes test-materials it places under "evil," "bad deeds," or "hardship." God says: "And We test you with evil and with good as trial, and to Us you will be returned." (Sūrat al-Anbiyā', 21:35). He also says: "And We tested them with good things and bad things so that they might return." (Sūrat al-A'rāf, 7:168). The aim of trial is to examine the extent to which one combats evil through good means consistent with God's teachings and His norms; the Qur'an provides many examples of such testing.

The human being is also tested by the constitution of the self and the components of personality that God fashioned with the capacity to respond with gratitude-gratitude for blessings. This is connected to responsibility and recompense in the Hereafter. Responsibility is tied to servitude before a Power that possesses the human being's entire affair-origin, life, and destiny-so that it becomes effective and influential when it is integrated with the human being's relationship to the Creator (Al-Kilani, 1998, p. 212).

Finally, all these relationships are mutually interwoven, and their very essence is the worship of God Almighty. Accordingly, God's will to create a human vicegerent on earth was not purposeless: "Did you then think that We created you in vain and that to Us you would not be returned?" (Sūrat al-Mu'minūn, 23:115). Rather, the human being was

created for a function to be fulfilled during the period of life in this universe and in the course of being entrusted with vicegerency on earth. This supreme mission rests upon a prior divine preparation-namely, that the human being was created “in the best form,” which enabled the human being to bear a tremendous trust: “Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; yet the human being bore it. Indeed, he has been ever unjust and ignorant.” (*Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, 33:72). In its detailed and essential form, this mission is ultimately the worship of God Almighty.

Thus, the present study shows that all human functions-vicegerency (*khilāfah*), cultivating the earth (*imārah*), and worship (*ibādah*)-are interrelated objectives. The cultivation of the earth falls within vicegerency, and both are forms of worship of God Most High. Worship, moreover, is intrinsic to vicegerency; there is no vicegerency without worship.

#### 4. A Comparison of the Human Being’s Mission and Function in the Torah and the Holy Qur’an

After examining both sources with a comparative analytical approach regarding the human being’s mission and function, it is appropriate to present the principal points reached. The major similarities and differences may be summarized as follows:

##### 4.1. Points of Similarity

The most salient convergences in both sources include:

- In both sources, the human being is entrusted with a message (a “trust/amana”), manifested in worship (obedience), regardless of how worship is conceptualized-since it reflects the image of the human being through the human-God relationship.
- Both sources affirm the reality that the human being has a mission and a function. The Qur’an explicitly refers to this in God’s saying: “Indeed, I will place upon the earth a vicegerent.” By contrast, in the Torah this is inferred from the implications of the texts.
- In both sources, vicegerency/succession is conditional. In the Holy Qur’an, it is conditioned upon avoiding prohibitions and fulfilling commands; in the Torah, it is manifested in keeping the commandments and religious laws.
- Both sources explicitly prescribe the performance of religious duties (the commandments in the Torah, and the various manifestations of worship in the Qur’an), underscoring their overall importance and central status within each religion.
- The human role is interconnected in both sources. In the Qur’an, the human role appears in the ritual dimension that symbolizes love and obedience; in the Torah, the human being’s observance of the commandments similarly signifies love and obedience.
- The Torah’s account of the human being’s mission and function includes respect for the stated rulings and adherence to moral principles. The Qur’an likewise affirms

and emphasizes this, balancing the religious dimension with its practical application in conduct-especially in dealings with others.

#### 4.2. Points of Difference

The most important differences inferred from the two sources may be summarized as follows:

- In the Holy Qur'an, the human being is presented as God's vicegerent on earth, a role realized through worship by adhering to divine guidance and law-thereby regulating human conduct in relation to God, the universe, and creation, so that human life proceeds within a framework of righteousness. Vicegerency in the Qur'an is thus a universal mandate, conditional upon faith and righteous deeds. In the Torah, by contrast, vicegerency is portrayed as a particular mandate restricted to the Jewish person; it is, therefore, a special vicegerency for one nation rather than another.
- Vicegerency on behalf of God in the Qur'an entails implementing God's will by establishing His commands and avoiding His prohibitions in the most complete manner, which is achievable only through the path of worship. In the Torah, vicegerency is framed as deputation on behalf of a particularist, ethnically delimited conception of God, through establishing laws and preserving commandments as such.
- In the Qur'an, vicegerency and adherence to divine law are linked to otherworldly recompense, whereas in the Torah they are associated primarily with material recompense.
- In the Qur'an, the human being is distinguished from other creatures through reason and knowledge, as in: "And He taught Adam the names-all of them." In the Torah, distinction is articulated as the elevation of the Jewish human being over other human beings, and the preference of one nation over another; from this emerges the notion of a special vicegerency and a particular relationship between the Jewish person and God.
- God honored the human being, distinguished them among creation, and appointed them as vicegerent on earth for its cultivation (the human-universe relationship). By contrast, in the Torah, human existence is construed as possession of the land on the basis of the sanctity of a particular people.
- The conditions of vicegerency in the Qur'an are not restricted to any single nation, whereas in the Torah they are restricted to the Jewish nation alone.
- In the Qur'an, every action or stillness performed by the human being can realize servitude to God if intended as obedience; in the Torah, this comprehensive conception is absent.
- In the Qur'an, the human-God relationship is fundamentally one of servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*) grounded in an exalted conception of God; it is a relationship of

elevation. In the Torah, the relationship is depicted as obedience in exchange for land.

- In the Torah, the human relationship with God is particularized, in which the Lord is associated with the Jewish person alone, choosing them for Himself to the exclusion of others-unlike the Qur'an.
- In the Qur'an, *taskhīr* (subjection of the cosmos) is for the service of humankind in the Qur'anic sense, enabling the human being to employ their capacity in serving others and seeking God's pleasure through obedience. In the Torah, the Lord is portrayed as preparing the way for the service of a particular human group.
- In the Qur'an, the human message is the cultivation of the universe, completed and perfected through the method of worship; these are two dimensions of one reality-vicegerency. In the Torah, this idea is largely absent.
- The Qur'anic depiction of divine wisdom differs from that of the Torah: in the Qur'an, God honored the human being and subjected the universe to them so that human existence is realized in multiple dimensions, including the discovery of laws and order through penetrating scientific knowledge and opening the horizons of contemplation-an aspect shared in principle by human beings. In the Torah, the rationale of divine preference, as portrayed here, does not extend beyond domination over what exists.
- In the Torah, the human function and mission appear largely confined to commandments and their transmission among particular persons, whereas in the Qur'an the human being is required to fulfill commands and avoid prohibitions in order to achieve a lofty end.
- In the Qur'an, the community that governs by God's revealed law is a community of vicegerency on behalf of God, because it judges only by what God has revealed; such a community therefore merits divine reward-unlike the Torah.
- Qur'anic teachings show that the human being does not live merely as an isolated self, but also as a social being; neither dimension can dispense with the other. Social life is a fabric of relations among individuals and groups, together with the transactions and systems that govern them. Social servitude consists in applying God's law within these systems and transactions, whether with Muslims or non-Muslims. In the Torah, by contrast, the human being is depicted as living primarily as an isolated self, and with their own kind only; this reinforces the distinctiveness of the Jewish person vis-à-vis others. This difference also affects the realization of servitude: in the Qur'an, individuals are obligated first to realize individual servitude, and then to submit in their dealings, systems, and public ways of life to God's legislative will. If servitude is redirected to other than God-through submission to man-made laws and humanly devised systems in social relations and transactions-then servitude is diverted away from God, and full vicegerency as God intended is thereby undermined.

- The human being's relationship with the Lord is determined through realizing vicegerency by means of servitude (whether Muslim or otherwise), and the human being's relationship with the universe in general and earthly creation in particular is determined through harnessing them via progress in knowledge and science. In this way, the human being demonstrates the centrality of their existence among creatures and among other nations through the method of servitude and submission to God Almighty. By contrast, the principal work upon which human vicegerency in the Torah is said to rest is empowerment in the land alone, which indicates the absence of an active sphere directed toward seeking God's pleasure and acting for His sake.
- The human function in the Qur'an does not call for rupture or separation; rather, it calls for a firm linkage between this world and the Hereafter-unlike the function in the Torah, which is portrayed as prioritizing worldly empowerment over the Hereafter.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the human being's mission and function in both the Torah and the Qur'an revolve around the notion of serving as God's vicegerent on earth, bearing responsibility for its proper worship, cultivation, and reform. In the Qur'an, the ultimate aim is comprehensive worship, the development of the earth, and the purification of the self in accordance with divine guidance. In the Torah, the emphasis falls on obedience to God, preserving the commandments, and living within the framework of the divine covenant through justice and a holy life.

Through this study, we have arrived at the following results:

- a.** In the Holy Qur'an, the human being's mission and function are embodied in realizing vicegerency in its proper form. This constitutes a hallmark of Islamic civilization, a pillar of social life, a foundation of psychological well-being in this world and the Hereafter, and a basis for social and global peace. By contrast, in the Torah, the human function is framed as a particular vicegerency assigned to a particular people.
- b.** In the Qur'an, the human mission and function give rise to multiple relationships within the sphere of worship, including the human relationship with others—a relationship grounded in justice (as a dimension of worship) and the rejection of discriminatory distinction. In the Torah, by contrast, the Jewish person's relationship with others is limited, as the "other" is not regarded as attaining the status of the Jewish person so as to share in that covenantal standing; this is linked to fulfilling the function defined as obedience to the Lord as stated in the commandments.
- c.** In Islam, worldly life is not separable from the Hereafter; this is evident in the human mission and true function (worship and cultivation), where relationships appear fully interconnected. In Jewish doctrine, however, the overall outlook—according to the

Jewish believer's understanding-reveals a structural imbalance in the conception of human existence, leading to the predominance of worldly concerns (empowerment in the land) over the Hereafter.

d. The outcome of human agency within a civilization that neither believes in God nor obeys Him in His law ultimately leads to nothing; this, the study argues, is the expected fate of any nation that fails to realize the methodology of worshiping God Almighty in life.

e. The fundamental difference between the Islamic community and the Jewish community lies in the soundness of belief and in how each person within the two communities conceives of God: if one believes and affirms the oneness of the Lord Almighty, one proceeds along the path of vicegerency and the attainment of God's pleasure; consequently, its features are established and its efforts become clear in harnessing the universe. If, however, one falls into associating partners with God, one moves toward decline, and one's strength diminishes and dissipates.

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### Ethical approval

Not applicable. This study is based on the analysis of publicly available texts and did not involve human participants, personal data, or animal subjects.

### Author contributions

Author contributions: The author solely conceived and designed the study, collected and analyzed the textual materials, wrote the original draft, and revised and approved the final manuscript.

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