

Muhammad in the Bible?

An Analysis of the Muslim Appeal to Biblical Prophecy

By [David Wood](#)

According to many Muslims, the Bible is full of prophecies about Muhammad.^[1] Christian apologists have spent a great deal of time refuting this claim, but, as the following account will demonstrate, the Bible does contain clear prophecies about Muhammad. Nevertheless, the Muslim search for prophecies supporting Islam has been sloppy; as a result, defenders of Islam have failed to provide a single well-evidenced example of a Biblical prediction about their prophet. Thus, after briefly examining the Qur'anic claim to Biblical support, I will show (1) that the standard Biblical verses used by Muslims to support this claim are extremely problematic for Islam, and (2) that Christian apologists are wrong when they claim that the Bible is silent when it comes to Islam.

The Qur'an expressly states that both the Old and New Testaments contain references to Muhammad:

Those who follow the Messenger, The unlettered Prophet, Whom they find mentioned In their own (Scriptures)—In the Law and the Gospel— ... It is they who will prosper. (Qur'an 7:157)^[2]

And remember, Jesus, The son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (Sent) to you, confirming The Law (which came) Before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger To come after me, Whose name shall be Ahmad [i.e. Muhammad]." (Qur'an 61:6)

Similarly, early Muslim writings suggest that the Bible contains numerous prophecies about Muhammad:

Ata Ibn Yasar narrated: "I met Abdullah bin Umar bin Amr bin Al-As and asked him: 'Tell me about the description of Allah's Apostle (the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him) which is mentioned in the Torah (i.e. Old Testament).' He replied: 'Yes, By Allah, he is described in the Torah with some of the qualities attributed to him in the Qur'an.'"^[3]

I was told the story of Abdullah bin Salam, a learned rabbi, by one of his family. He said: "When I heard about the apostle I knew by his description, name, and the time at which he appeared that he was the one we were waiting for, and I rejoiced greatly thereat. . . . I emerged and said: 'O Jews, fear God and accept what He has sent you. For by God you know that he is the apostle of God. You will find him described in your Torah and even named.'"^[4]

Among the things which have reached me about what Jesus the Son of Mary stated in the Gospel which he received from God for the followers of the Gospel, in applying a term to describe the apostle of God, is the following. It is extracted from what John the Apostle set down for them when he wrote the Gospel for them from the Testament of Jesus Son of Mary: "He that hateth me hath hated the Lord. And if I had not done in their presence works which none other before me did, they had not had sin: but from now they are puffed up with pride and think that they will overcome me and also the Lord. But the word that is in the law must be fulfilled, 'They hated me without a cause' (i.e. without reason). But when the Comforter has come whom God will send to you from the Lord's presence, and the spirit of truth which will have gone forth from the Lord's presence he (shall bear) witness of me and ye also, because ye have been with me from the beginning. I have spoken unto you about this that ye should not be in doubt."^[5]

So Heraclius ordered the Roman generals [who were Christians] to assemble in a room and commanded that the doors should be fastened. Then he looked down on them from an upper chamber (for he was afraid of them) and said: "O Romans, I have brought you together for a good purpose. This man [i.e. Muhammad] has written me a letter summoning me to his religion. By God, he is truly the prophet whom we expect and find in our books, so come and let us follow him and believe in him that it may be well with us in this world and the next."^[6]

Recognizing the importance of the Qur'anic assertion that the Bible contains clear prophecies about Muhammad, Muslims have spent nearly fourteen centuries trying to find these prophecies. While hundreds of verses have been suggested as candidates, only a handful are now being seriously put forward as Biblical references to Muhammad. Of this handful, two are most common: Moses' prophecy of a prophet similar to himself and Jesus' prediction of the coming "Comforter." Since these are Islam's most significant examples of Biblical support for Muhammad, we shall call these two prophecies the "Major Prophecies." The remaining, less important ones shall be referred as the "Minor Prophecies."

The Major Prophecies

In his note on verse 7:157 of the Qur'an, commentator Yusuf Ali offers the following evidence for the claim that Muhammad is mentioned in "the Law and the Gospel":

In this verse is a prefiguring, to Moses, of the Arabian Messenger, the last and greatest of the Messengers of Allah.

Prophecies about him will be found in the *Tawrah* and the *Injil* [Gospel]. In the reflex of the *Tawrah* as now accepted by the Jews, Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18:15): the only Prophet who brought a Shari'ah [Law] like that of Moses was Muhammad al Mustafa, and he came of the house of Isma'il, the brother of Isaac, the father of Israel. In the reflex of the Gospel as now accepted by Christians, Christ promised another Comforter, (John 14:16): the Greek word *Paraclete* which the Christians interpret as referring to the Holy Spirit is by our Doctors taken to be *Periclyte*, which would be the Greek form of Ahmad.^[7]

Hence, to defend the validity of the Qur'an on this issue, Ali offers a single prophecy from the Old Testament and another from the New Testament. Together, these two predictions form the "one-two punch" of the Argument from Biblical Prophecy. Yet Muslims have to tear both prophecies out of context in order to make them conform to the Islamic interpretation. (This is why Islamic books and pamphlets rarely quote entire passages; to do so would expose the context and would refute the argument.) A careful analysis reveals the truth about these texts.

The first of the Major Prophecies comes from Deuteronomy, where Moses predicts the rise of another prophet:

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)^[8]

Muslims argue that this prophecy could only have been fulfilled by Muhammad, who, like Moses, was a lawgiver, a prophet, and a military leader. Further, this Prophet was to come from the *brethren* of the Israelites, which must be a reference to the Ishmaelites (Muhammad's purported ancestors), for Ishmael was the brother of Isaac, the father of Israel. These facts, along with other similarities between Muhammad and Moses, support the identification of "the Prophet" with Muhammad.

If we were to take Deuteronomy 18:15 by itself, completely ignoring the rest of the book, we might have some reason to agree with the Muslim apologists on this issue. However, even a cursory examination of the context of this prophecy demonstrates the flaws in the Islamic position.

First, the passage says that God will raise up a prophet like Moses, *because the Israelites didn't want to speak directly with God*. The Israelites said, "Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God ... that I die not," and God replied, "They have well spoken that which they have spoken." Hence, when verse 18:15 is taken in context, we see that the Jews were asking for a *mediator*, someone to stand between them and God just as Moses did. The ultimate fulfillment of this passage would be someone who stands as a *permanent* mediator between God and man. While Muhammad could certainly be viewed as an intermediary of some sort, the passage seems to fit more comfortably if the Prophet is Jesus. At best, one could argue that Muhammad was a link in the chain of transmission from the Qur'an, from Allah, to Gabriel, to Muhammad, to mankind. But this doesn't fulfill the prophecy. Muslims don't believe in the sort of mediator required by Deuteronomy 18. In Christianity, however, Jesus is a permanent mediator: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Next, Moses says that God will raise up a prophet "from the midst of thee." Since he is talking to Israelites, it sounds as if God is telling them that he will raise up a prophet from the midst of *Israel*. In any case, Muhammad surely wasn't raised up from the midst of Jews. Jesus, on the other hand, was born and raised in Israel, so the context again fits more comfortably if Moses is referring to Jesus.

Third, although Muslims often claim that the term "brethren" must refer to the Ishmaelites, the Book of Deuteronomy shows that this claim is completely false. To be sure, "brethren" can be used to refer to people other than the Jews, and it is used in this manner with the Edomites earlier in Deuteronomy (see 2:4). However, the term "brethren" is most commonly used when referring to other Israelites:

If there be among you a poor man of **one of thy brethren** within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. (Deuteronomy 15:7)

That this verse refers to fellow Israelites is clear from the verses that follow, for Moses tells his listeners not to ignore the brother just because the year for canceling debts is near (the year of debt-cancellation was meant for fellow Israelites).

"Brethren" is also used regarding the selection of a king:

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. (Deuteronomy 17:14-15)

The Jews obviously weren't being commanded to seek an Arab king here. Rather, they were commanded to get a king "from among thy brethren," meaning a fellow Jew. The term "brethren" is even used as a reference to other Israelites in Deuteronomy 18, *the same chapter*

from which the prophecy is taken:

The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance **with Israel**: They shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among **their brethren**: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. (Deuteronomy 18:1-2)

The Levites were to have no inheritance among their brethren (the other tribes of Israel). This is how chapter 18 begins, and we're never given so much as a hint that the meaning of "brethren" has changed so that, by verse 15, it refers to *Ishmaelites*. Given this repeated use of "brethren" to refer to Israelites, it is disturbing to read Muslim polemics which claim that "Ishmaelites" is the only possible interpretation of "brethren." Consider, for instance, what Deedat says about "brethren":

The children of Isaac are the brethren of the Ishmaelites. In like manner Muhammed is from among the brethren of the Israelites because he was a descendent of Ishmael the son of Abraham. This is exactly as the prophecy has it—"FROM AMONG THEIR BRETHREN". (Deut. 18:18). There the prophecy distinctly mentions that the coming prophet who would be like Moses, must arise NOT from the "children of Israel" or from "among themselves", but from among their brethren. MUHAMMAD THEREFORE WAS FROM AMONG THEIR BRETHREN!^[9]

Contrary to what Deedat suggests, Moses' prophecy doesn't say that the prophet must not come from the children of Israel. Indeed, given the repeated use of "brethren" to refer to Israelites in Deuteronomy (especially in chapter 18), it is a wonder that anyone would interpret it otherwise. Deedat is therefore either completely ignorant of how "brethren" is used in Deuteronomy, or deliberately deceptive towards his Muslim readers (knowing that few of them will actually examine his absurd claim).

Fourth, the conclusion of the Book of Deuteronomy tells us how we should interpret Moses' phrase "like unto me":

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. **And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders**, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel. (Deuteronomy 34:9-12)

Here the phrase "like unto Moses" suggests a prophet who would speak with God face to face and perform signs and wonders "in the sight of all Israel." Muhammad doesn't fit either of these criteria. He claimed to have received his revelations from Gabriel, not directly from God, and he admittedly could not perform miracles.^[10] Jesus, however, both performed miracles (as even the Qur'an acknowledges^[11]) and spoke directly with God:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, **but what he seeth the Father do**: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. **For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth**: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. (John 5:19-20)

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; **but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things**. (John 8:28)

For I have not spoken of myself; **but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak**. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, **even as the Father said unto me, so I speak**. (John 12:49)

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: **and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me**. (John 14:24)

Finally, while Muslims appeal to Deuteronomy 18:15-19 as evidence for their prophet, they would do well to read the next verse, which, when combined with a certain embarrassing event from Muhammad's life, turns out to be proof *against* the prophet of Islam. In Deuteronomy 18:20, God declares:

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

Here God gives us two criteria for recognizing a false prophet: (1) If a person delivers a revelation which doesn't come from God, the person is a false prophet; and (2) if a person speaks in the name of other gods, the person is a false prophet. Interestingly, Muhammad meets both criteria, for he delivered the infamous "Satanic Verses" (i.e. verses he gave to his followers as part of the Qur'an but later claimed were inspired by Satan). Since these verses did not come from God, Muhammad meets the first criterion. And since the verses promoted polytheism, Muhammad meets the second criterion as well. Hence, the very passage that Muslims claim as their primary Biblical prophecy about Muhammad turns out to proclaim that Muhammad can't be a prophet at all! (For a much fuller treatment of Deuteronomy 18:20 as evidence against Muhammad, see "[The Deuteronomy Deductions](#).")

True, Moses and Muhammad had some similarities. Nevertheless, when we examine the context in Deuteronomy, we find that these similarities count for little. Moses told the Israelites that God would send them another intercessor; in the New Testament, Jesus is the mediator between God and man. Moses told the Israelites that God would raise up a prophet from the midst of them; whereas Jesus was born in Israel, Muhammad was born in what is now Saudi Arabia. Moses told the Israelites that the prophet would come from among their "brethren," a term that is used over and over again to refer to their fellow Israelites; Jesus was a Jew, yet Muhammad was an Arab. Moses was known as a miracle worker who spoke directly to God; it is Jesus, not Muhammad, who was like Moses in these respects. On top of all this, Deuteronomy 18:20 rules out Muhammad as a prophet.

Of course, Muslims are free to believe that Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 refers to Muhammad. But when they offer this verse as evidence of Muhammad's prophethood, the burden of proof is on them. Since the major characteristics of the Prophet in Deuteronomy apply most directly to Jesus, Muslims need to find another Major Prophecy to sustain the Qur'anic claim to Biblical support.

At this point, Muslims turn to the book of John, where Jesus predicts the coming "Comforter":

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:15-18)

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:25-26)

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27)

Oddly enough, Muslims see these passages as predictions of the coming of Muhammad. Indeed, after quoting all three passages about the Comforter, Maulana Muhammad Ali maintains, "All these prophetic words predict in unequivocal terms the advent of another prophet after Jesus."^[12] Muslims reason that, since the Comforter will not come unless Jesus returns to the Father, this prophecy cannot possibly be referring to the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit was already present in Jesus. Thus, Jesus must have been predicting the rise of another prophet, and (for some reason) Muhammad is the only possible candidate. Such a claim is, to say the least, quite baffling to anyone familiar with John's Gospel.

First, Muslims draw this prophecy from a book that begins by declaring that Jesus is God and that he created all things (John 1:1-3). In the Book of John, Jesus claims to have existed before Abraham (8:58) and describes himself as the ladder between heaven and earth (1:51; cf. Genesis 28:10-17). A blind man who receives his sight worships Jesus (9:35-38), and Thomas calls Jesus "My Lord and my God" (20:28). Jesus is crucified, dead, buried, and resurrected, events that are at odds with the Qur'an. Further, in the very chapters to which Muslims appeal for their predictions about Muhammad, Jesus proclaims that he is the only way to God (14:6), that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father (14:9), that he is "in the Father" and that the Father is in him (14:11), that he can answer prayers (14:14), and that we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in him (15:4). We might wonder why Muslims appeal to a book that is so diametrically opposed to Islam. However, we must remember that Muhammad declared that there are prophecies about him in the New Testament. Muslims are thus forced into grasping at anything that will help them vindicate Muhammad's claim.

Second, the three passages from John repeatedly identify the Comforter as the Holy Spirit (or the "Spirit of Truth"). Yet Muslims argue that these verses simply can't refer to the Holy Spirit:

The terms of the prophecy do not warrant the conclusion that they are applicable to the Holy Ghost. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" are words too clear to need any comment. The New Testament says that John was filled with the Holy Ghost even before he was born. Then it speaks of Jesus himself as receiving the Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove. Thus the Holy Ghost used to visit men before the time of Jesus as well as in his own time.^[13]

This argument clearly misses the point of Jesus' prediction. Jesus acknowledges that the Spirit was already with them: "... for he dwelleth with you." The prophecy was that the Spirit would be *in* them and dwell with them *forever*. This was something entirely new, and it was by no means invalidated because the Spirit was already in Jesus.

Third, as we just saw, Jesus says that the Comforter would be with his disciples *forever*. In no sense was Muhammad ever with Jesus' disciples, let alone with them permanently.

Fourth, according to the prophecy, the world cannot receive the Comforter because it cannot see him. Thousands of people saw Muhammad during his lifetime, for he was visible. Thus, the *invisible* Comforter cannot be the *visible* Muhammad.

Fifth, Jesus tells the disciples that the Comforter was already *with* them. While the Holy Spirit was with Jesus' disciples, Muhammad wasn't born for more than five centuries after this prophecy and therefore couldn't have been with them.

Sixth, the Comforter was to be *in* the disciples. Muhammad is not in Jesus' followers and never will be. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, filled the believers at Pentecost and has been in Christians ever since.

Seventh, Jesus said that he would send the Comforter from the Father. Muslims do not believe that Muhammad was sent by Jesus; they believe that Muhammad was sent by God. So, unless Muslims are willing to admit that Jesus is God, they should not accept this as a prophecy about Muhammad.

Finally, prior to his ascension, Jesus predicted that his followers would "be baptized with the Holy Ghost **not many days hence**" (Acts 1:5). The Holy Spirit came to Jesus' followers shortly after his ascension to the Father:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

Thus, the fulfillment of this prophecy came within a matter of days. Muhammad came more than five hundred years later.

Putting all of this together, we see that Muhammad could not have been the Comforter. He was not *with* the apostles, he was not *in* the apostles, he was not with them *forever*, he was not *invisible*, he was not *sent by Jesus*, and he did not come *quickly*, as Jesus said he would. Yet the Holy Spirit matches this description perfectly. Jesus identified the Comforter as the Holy Spirit, who was with the disciples, was in them at Pentecost, was invisible, came quickly, was sent by Jesus, and has been with Christians for nearly two thousand years. Given the facts, Muslims who apply these verses to Muhammad should be ashamed of themselves.

The Minor Prophecies

Although the most popular Muslim prophecies completely fail upon closer inspection, Muslim apologists have offered a number of other weaker examples of predictions about Muhammad. They are less common because, in context, they typically have nothing to do with a coming prophet or the rise of another religion. Muslims therefore have to force their own meaning into these prophecies, but they do so at the expense of their own integrity.

In addition to the prophecies discussed above, Maulana Muhammad Ali offers three other Biblical prophecies about the rise of Muhammad. Yet he begins, oddly enough, by quoting some verses from the Qur'an regarding the coming of a final prophet, and he goes on to argue that only Muhammad fits the description of the "Messenger" in these verses. Ali thus quotes verses given by Muhammad as evidence that Muhammad was the one proclaimed in the verses!^[14]

After engaging in this bit of circular reasoning, Ali offers a promise made to Abraham (cleverly combined with a later promise about Ishmael) as the first prediction of the rise of Islam:

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. (Genesis 17:20)

Ali considers this to be the first "prophecy announcing the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad."^[15] However, while I quoted the first passage in context, I left the second passage as it appears in Ali's book. Watch what happens when we include the surrounding verses:

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; **and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant**, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. **But my covenant will I establish with Isaac**, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. (Genesis 17:18-22)

Hence, to support his case, Ali quotes a promise that God made to Abraham, then quotes a verse about Ishmael, claiming that it shows that the promise refers to Ishmael and his descendents (i.e. Muhammad). Yet, in quoting the verse, he leaves out all the surrounding material, which states that the covenant was to be made, not with Ishmael, but with Isaac. Knowing that few of his readers will be so bold as to actually look up the references he cites, Ali has no difficulty wrenching this verse from its context, giving it a meaning far different from the one expressed in Genesis.

Nevertheless, Muslims still argue that this passage predicts the rise of a nation from Ishmael's descendents, and that such a prediction can only refer to the rise of Islam. However, the fulfillment of this prophecy took place in the Book of Genesis, not twenty-six centuries later in Mecca:

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphich, and Kedemah: **these are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.** (Genesis 25:12-16)

Ali's second example is Moses' prediction of a prophet like himself, which we have already addressed. His third prophecy also comes from Deuteronomy:

And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, And rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, And he came with ten thousands of saints: From his right hand went a fiery law for them. (Deuteronomy 33:1-2)

Notice that this passage says nothing about prophets. It is a description of God's victory in bringing the Israelites into the Holy Land. God was with them as they passed Sinai, Seir, and Paran. Indeed, the language used by Moses to describe God's help is common in the Old Testament:

LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, The clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the LORD, Even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel. (Judges 5:4-5)

O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, When thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped At the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved At the presence of God, the God of Israel. ... The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. (Psalm 68:7-8, 17)

Yet Muslim apologists claim that Moses' words at the beginning of his blessing aren't a description of God's victory; instead, they are a prediction of three great prophets. Ali argues:

"Coming from Sinai" refers to the appearance of Moses, while "rising up from Seir" refers to the conquest of Seir by David. Now Paran is admittedly the ancient name for the land of Hijaz, where arose Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from among the descendents of Ishmael.^[16]

Most Muslim commentators, however, believe that "Seir" refers to the prophethood of Jesus, not to the conquest of Seir by King David. Thus Badawi claims:

Deuteronomy 33:1-2 combines references to Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. It speaks of God (i.e. God's revelation) coming from Sinai, rising from Seir (probably the village of Sa'ir near Jerusalem) and shining forth from Paran. According to Genesis 21:21, the wilderness of Paran was the place where Ishmael settled (i.e. Arabia, specifically Mecca).^[17]

These interpretations are fraught with difficulties. Moses' blessing begins by saying that the LORD (not the prophets) came from Sinai, rose up from Seir, and shined forth from Mount Paran. To say that this really refers to prophets requires an unjustified leap of interpretation, especially since similar language is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe God's victories over Israel's enemies. Further, while God gave a revelation at Sinai, the Muslim interpretations of "Seir" are problematic. Ali holds that it refers to David's conquest of Seir, but what does this have to do with the rise of a prophet or the giving of revelation? Badawi says that the reference to Seir probably refers to the village of Sa'ir near Jerusalem. But this view is preposterous. The Pentateuch mentions Seir numerous times as the place where the Edomites settled, and the same word is used in Deuteronomy 33. Needless to say, the Edomites didn't settle in the village of Sa'ir near Jerusalem, which makes it impossible to link Jesus to Seir. Additionally, Paran (near Mecca, according to Muslims) is also mentioned several time in the Torah:

And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud [i.e. the glory of the LORD] rested in the wilderness of Paran. (Numbers 10:12)

And afterward the people removed from Hazereth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran. (Numbers 12:16)

And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel. (Numbers 13:3)

And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. (Numbers 13:26)

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazereth, and Dizahab. (Deuteronomy 1:1)

Mount Paran is in northwestern Sinai, a great distance from Mecca. However, even if Paran were the land of Muhammad, as Badawi

claims, the Torah would simply be telling us that the Israelites spent time there during their flight from Egypt, and that the fiery pillar of the glory of God rested there for a time. It makes sense, then, to think that Moses' report that the LORD "shined forth from mount Paran" refers to the LORD literally shining forth from Mount Paran, not to Muhammad figuratively shining forth with the Qur'an in Mecca.

Ali's final prophecy (other than Jesus' prediction of the coming Comforter) is taken from Isaiah:

The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye traveling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, They prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, And from the grievousness of war. (Isaiah 21:13-15)

According to Ali, this "burden upon Arabia" is a clear prophecy about Muhammad:

In the first place the word "Arabia" is by itself significant enough. Then the mention of one who fled sheds still further light on the object of the prophecy. The history of the world records but one such flight that has won the importance of a red-letter event—the flight of the Holy Prophet Muhammad from Makkah. ... A yet clearer testimony, however, is contained in the words, "he fled from drawn swords." History confirms that the Holy Prophet Muhammad fled from Makkah while his house was still surrounded by blood-thirsty enemies with drawn swords ready to fall upon him in a body as soon as he came out. ... These two authoritative facts of history, supplemented by a direct mention of the land of Arabia as the birth-place of the Promised Prophet, furnished an indisputable clue that the prophecy refers to the Holy Prophet Muhammad.^[18]

Before we agree with Ali that this prophecy is "indisputable," perhaps we should read the next two verses, which he conveniently leaves out of his quotation:

For thus hath the Lord said unto me, **Within a year**, according to the years of a hireling, And all the glory of Kedar shall fail: And the residue of the number of archers, The mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: For the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it. (Isaiah 21:16-17)

The verses that Ali omits provide a timeframe for when the prophecy was to be fulfilled. The fulfillment was to take place within a year of the prophecy! While we cannot be certain when the prophecy was made, we know that Isaiah wrote during the expansion of the Assyrian empire, and that the Assyrians began invading Arabia in 732 B.C. Further, the inhabitants of Tema lived approximately four hundred miles north of Mecca, so it is difficult to imagine how the prophecy could apply to Muhammad's flight from Mecca. It seems most reasonable, then, to conclude that Isaiah prophesied about the Assyrian empire's attacks on Arabia that occurred during his own lifetime, not about Muhammad's flight from Mecca more than a thousand years later.

This concludes Ali's evidence that the Bible speaks about Muhammad. Other Muslim apologists offer a few additional prophecies, but they all suffer from the same problems. After examining five Biblical "prophecies" about Muhammad, we can see that the method Muslims use in their Argument from Biblical Prophecy consists of the following steps:

Step One: Find any verse in the Bible that can be interpreted, by a stretch of the imagination, as a prophecy about Muhammad;

Step Two: Wrench the verse from its context, ignoring the verses that precede it and those that follow;

Step Three: Ignore all obvious, common-sensical interpretations of the prophecy, especially those that were fulfilled shortly after the prophecy was given;

Step Four: Popularize the prophecy and the Muslim interpretation in books, pamphlets, sermons, and internet articles, knowing that few people will ever critically examine the passage.

While such a method appears detestable to the uninitiated, it comes quite naturally to many Muslim apologists. Nevertheless, it isn't really their fault. Muhammad claimed that the Bible is full of prophecies about the rise of Islam, so Muslims are doing their best to find those prophecies. They've spent nearly fourteen centuries searching for at least two unambiguous predictions (one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament), yet all their attempts have failed. This presents an enormous problem for Islam, for this lack of Biblical support leads to a devastating conclusion. Since Muhammad claimed that the Bible predicts the rise of Islam, the following syllogism refutes Muhammad's prophethood:

Premise One: If Muhammad was a true prophet, the Bible must contain numerous clear prophecies about him (for this is what he claimed).

Premise Two: There are no clear prophecies about Muhammad in the Bible.

Conclusion: Therefore, Muhammad was not a true prophet.

Of course, this means that the Muslim search for Biblical support has actually backfired and shown the religion to be false. However, such a conclusion may be too hasty, for, in reality, the Bible does contain prophecies about Muhammad. Muslims have simply overlooked them.

The True Prophecies

Consider the following passages drawn from the New Testament:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (Matthew 7:15-16)

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. (Matthew 24:9-11)

And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

These verses need not be applied solely to Muhammad. Yet, without a doubt, Muhammad is a fulfillment of many New Testament prophecies. First, Jesus said that false prophets come in sheep's clothing, but are actually ravening wolves. Muhammad fits this criterion better than anyone else in history. He convinced his followers that he was the greatest moral example in history, yet he murdered countless people, took part in the slave trade, allowed husbands to beat their wives, allowed his men to have sex with their female slaves, had at least nine wives at one time, admittedly proclaimed verses from Satan, and had sex with a nine-year-old girl.^[19] If Muhammad doesn't fulfill Jesus' prophecy, then who does?

Next, Jesus said that false prophets would arise, and that they would deceive *many*. There are currently more than a billion Muslims in the world, and Islam is one of the world's fastest growing religions. This means that Muhammad is the greatest false prophet of all time, and the most obvious fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy.

Third, the Apostle Paul said that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. If Muhammad had been aware of this, perhaps he would have trusted his first instinct when a spirit claiming to be Gabriel suddenly appeared to him. (Muhammad's first impression of his revelations was that he was under demonic attack.^[20]) This is a clear fulfillment of Paul's words.

Fourth, Paul said that people would give heed to "seducing spirits" and "doctrines of devils." Muhammad's infamous "Satanic Verses" provide a striking example of this. The Prophet of Islam received revelations saying that it was okay for his followers to pray to gods besides Allah. Later, he claimed that Satan had put those words on his lips.^[21] Muhammad was therefore seduced by the doctrines of Satan, just as Paul predicted.

Fifth, Paul predicted that a time would come when people would not listen to sound doctrine. Instead, they would turn their ears away from the truth and listen to fables. An application of this prophecy can be made to Muslims today. While there are many Muslims who seek the truth, there are also many who don't seem to care where the evidence points. Instead of acknowledging that Islam is an untenable religion, they go to teachers like Jamal Badawi and Shabir Ally, who tell them what they want to hear.

These prophecies may all be applied to Muhammad and to Islam. Thus, when Muhammad claimed that other messengers of God had prophesied about him, he was correct. The problem is that these messengers predicted the rise of false prophets, not the rise of a new religion after Christianity. Tragically, most people haven't heeded the warnings of the prophets. To this day, many even reject the words of Christ. Yet when a man rises from the dead, vindicated by God, everyone should listen to what he says. And when this risen man tells us that false prophets will come, we should probably be suspicious of anyone claiming to be a prophet—especially one with Muhammad's character flaws. Indeed, in addition to his other flaws, Muhammad is guilty rejecting one of the clearest prophecies in history, a prophecy about the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth:

Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, And as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: And we hid as it were our faces from him; He was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, And carried our sorrows: Yet we did esteem him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon him; And with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned every one to his own way; And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, Yet he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: And who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: For the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, And with the rich in his death; Because he had done no violence, Neither was any

deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; For he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, And he shall divide the spoil with the strong; Because he hath poured out his soul unto death: And he was numbered with the transgressors; And he bare the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:1-12)

Notes:

¹ "Prophecies about the advent of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, are met with in earlier sacred books and had great currency among the nations. . . . The Qur'an asserts that the appearance of the Holy Prophet was foretold by each and all of the foregoing prophets, through whom the covenant was also made with their respective peoples that they would accept him when he made his appearance" (Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet* [St. Lambert: Payette and Sims, 1993], p. 22).

² All Qur'an quotations are taken from the Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation.

³ *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Dr. Muhammad Matraji, tr. (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2002), Number 2125.

⁴ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah (The Life of Muhammad)*, A. Guillaume, tr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 240-241.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 656.

⁷ Yusuf Ali, Note 1127. Ali, like many other Muslim commentators, believes that the Greek *Paracletos* (comforter, helper, counselor) should be rendered *Periclytos* (which, he claims, is the Greek form of Ahmad). However, there are more than 5,000 extant Greek manuscripts of John's Gospel, and not a single one agrees with Ali's claim. Muslim apologists fail to realize that, when a claim is made, evidence is required. There is simply no justification for the idea that the verse should read "Periclytos."

⁸ All Bible quotations are taken from the King James Version, since this is the version that Muslims typically use in their apologetics.

⁹ Ahmad Deedat, *What the Bible Says About Muhammad* (New Dehli: Islamic Book Service), p. 13.

¹⁰ "But (now), when the Truth Has come to them from Ourselves, They say, 'Why are not (Signs) sent to him like Those which were sent to Moses?' Do they not then reject (The Signs) which were formerly Sent to Moses?" (Qur'an 28:48). Ibn Ishaq adds: "[Muhammad said]: 'How unfortunate is the death of Abu Umama! The Jews and the Arab hypocrites are sure to say "If he were a prophet his companion would not die" and (truly) I have no power from God for myself or for my companion (to avert death)'" (p. 235).

¹¹ Qur'an 3:49.

¹² Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad in the Bible*, p. 27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷ See Jamal Badawi, "[Muhammad in the Bible](#)."

¹⁸ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad in the Bible*, p. 26.

¹⁹ For references, see "[Islam Beheaded](#)."

²⁰ For more on this, see "[A Bewitched Prophet?](#)"

²¹ See "[A Bewitched Prophet?](#)"

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[Answering Islam](#) Home Page