

The Place of Moses in the Qur'an and Its Significance for a Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

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Zusammenfassung

Die Figur des Moses konstituiert eine wichtige Verbindung zwischen jüdischen und muslimischen Traditionen. Im islamischen Sinne ist Moses einer der fünf Hauptpropheten Gottes. Seine Geschichte bestimmt daher einen maßgeblichen Stellenwert im Koran und obwohl kleinere Unterschiede vorherrschen, ist es die koranische Geschichte des Moses, die die der Tora bestätigt. Sein Leben ist daher als Vorbild für Muslime zu sehen. Einzelne Elemente seiner Geschichte finden sich an verschiedenen Stellen des Korans; es ist jedoch das siebte Kapitel, welches das Leben Moses im Detail beschreibt. Der Text wird sich daher auf dieses Kapitel konzentrieren, da es jene Ereignisse im Leben des Moses beschreibt, die zum einen essentiell für Muslime und Juden sind und zum anderen die Signifikanz und Frömmigkeit des Moses aufzeigt. Auch bringt dieses Kapitel die Ähnlichkeiten des islamischen Moses und des jüdischen Moses zum Vorschein. Anhand einer Untersuchung der im Koran aufgeführten Ereignisse im Leben des Moses wird er zu einer Schlüsselfigur um Freundschaft, Harmonie und Frieden zwischen Juden und Muslime zu schaffen. Moses wird somit zum gemeinsamen Nenner um einen Dialog zwischen den beiden Religionen zu kreieren und ihrer Hingabe den ‚Einen Gott‘ zu huldigen voran zu treiben.

Abstract

The figure of Moses constitutes an important link between Jewish and Muslim traditions. Muslims consider him to be one of the five elite prophets of God, his story therefore has a prominent place in the Qur'an. While there are minor differences, the story of Moses found in the Qur'an confirms the account of the Torah; the life of Moses thus is considered a model for all Muslims to follow. Though elements of his story are found throughout the Qur'an, it is in chapter 7 where it is given in its greatest detail. As the focus point of this article, chapter 7 discusses many events in Moses' life, which are

important for both Muslims and Jews, and reveals his great importance and Godliness. It also demonstrates how truly similar Islam's Moses and Judaism's Moses are. Therefore, through an examination of the various elements of the story of Moses as found in the Qur'an, this article will show how by following him, Jews and Muslims can come together in friendship, harmony and peace. Moses is the common ground on which Jews and Muslims can come together in order to open up a dialogue and further their shared commitment to the worship of the One God.

Islamic theology gives paramount importance to Moses. His story and his struggle against Pharaoh occupy an important place in the Qur'an and he is presented as a role model for Muslims. Along with Noah, Abraham, Jesus and, Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon them all), he is known as the possessor of steadfastness in Islamic theology – together, they are the five elite prophets of God. He is mentioned by name far more often than any other individual in the Qur'an; indeed the name Musa, the Arabic name for Moses, occurs in at least 124 verses. One Qur'anic verse speaks of three titles of Moses: *mukhlas* (one whom God has made pure and sincere), *rasul* (a messenger), and *nabi* (a prophet): “And mention Moses in the Book; he was *mukhlas*, and he was a messenger, and a prophet” (19:51). A rigorous academic study of Moses in the Qur'an has yet to be undertaken, and given the vastness of Moses' story, it will most likely be a difficult exercise. My aim in this paper is to highlight a few salient points and discuss their significance for a Jewish-Muslim dialogue.

Much of the Qur'anic account of Moses confirms the version found in the Torah. His story is mentioned in several chapters of the Qur'an, each one having a slightly different emphasis. It includes significant information on the mother of Moses as well as his on family.¹ One of the largest chapters of the Qur'an, chapter 3, “The Family of Imran”, is named after the family of Moses. According to the Qur'an, Moses was born into a Hebrew family in Egypt. It was due to Pharaoh's oppression and the killing of Israelite boys that Moses' mother decided to reluctantly abandon him; yet it was Pharaoh's people who eventually found him in the river Nile. He was raised in the royal

¹ Though it is not my topic here, many of the strongest female characters in the Qur'an, Moses' mother and sister and the wife of Pharaoh, are found in the Moses story. There is indeed, much that needs to be written concerning these three female figures.

household, but was eventually cast out destined to return to free his people from Pharaoh's tyrannical rule. Ultimately, he led his people out of Egypt and was given the Torah by God.

It should be noted at the outset that I hope to alter some common misconceptions in this article, which many, particularly many Muslims, have concerning Jews and Judaism vis-à-vis Islam and the Qur'an. Undoubtedly, when referring to the "People of the Book", which Moses is one of, hostility towards the Jewish people as a whole does not exist in the Qur'an itself. There are criticisms of individual Jews or specific groups of Jews, but this should not be taken as a criticism of Judaism or of the totality of the Jewish people and certainly not of specific Jews living today. The criticisms in the Qur'an, whether of individual Jews, Christians, or others must not be generalized; instead, they should be taken as criticisms of individuals' characteristics rather than of their religion or ethnic background. Part of this misunderstanding, I think, comes from classical commentators and not from the Qur'an itself. We must distinguish between commentators, who lived in, wrote, and were influenced by their social and cultural environment and the Qur'an itself.²

Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, a German-American Jewish scholar, considered the similarities between Moses and Muhammad, as well as the similarities between their messages, as a common ground for dialogue between Muslims and Jews. The cardinal belief of both Islam and Judaism is monotheism. Both religious traditions believe in the One God, the creator of the heavens and the earth. Moreover, each tradition believes that their founder is a prophet, a human being, not a deity; the prophets are able to perform miracles only with divine help. Also, both Moses and Muhammad were born in a natural way.³ Beyond this, in the Islamic tradition, it is known that on one occasion, when the Prophet of Islam was compared to Moses, he humbled himself and indicated

² Linguistically speaking, verses which can be taken as having negative connotations for a broader group of people in the "People of the Book", use words, such as *min*, or some, to indicate that this is not referring to all people from a certain group. Again, to fully explicate this idea is well beyond the bounds of this study. For a more detailed look at some of these issues see Zeki Saritoprak: Said Nursi's Teachings on the People of the Book: a Case Study of Islamic Social Policy in the Early Twentieth Century, in: *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 11 (2000), pp. 321–332.

³ Trude Weiss-Rosmarin: *Toward Jewish-Muslim Dialogue*, in: *The Jewish Spectator*, September 1967.

that Moses was above him by saying: “Do not take me higher than Moses”.⁴ There is no doubt then that Moses is a person, who can simultaneously serve as a link between Islam and Judaism and promote dialogue and collaboration between these two monotheistic religions. It is to this that I now turn.

The Qur’an describes both Moses and Muhammad as the conveyers of the divine message. Both of them conveyed the scriptures, which were revealed to their hearts, directly to the minds of people in a nonviolent way. Therefore, one central theme in the story of Moses is the transmission of the message of One God through a general ethic of non-violence. This is most evident when he is commanded by God to convey the divine message to Pharaoh. Moses, who wished for a supporter and helper, asked God for Aaron to accompany him (this is why in the Islamic tradition both Moses and Aaron are messengers of God). In the Qur’an, this story is narrated and presented as an example of non-violence and positive dialogue. The Qur’an clearly describes Pharaoh as God’s, as well as Moses’, enemy (Q 20:39). However, despite the animosity of Pharaoh, God commands Moses to go and speak to him in a soft-spoken manner. The Qur’an says: “Go [with your brother, Aaron] with My signs and do not be reluctant in remembrance of Me. Go both of you to Pharaoh. Surely he has transgressed the bounds. Both of you speak to him with gentle words so that perhaps he may come to himself or have fear of God” (Q 20:42–44). This idea of speaking gently and unostentatiously is central among Muslim commentators of the Qur’an. The prominent commentator al-Tabari (d. 923 CE) suggests that God instructed Moses and Aaron to speak in a way that would not provoke anger or wrath in order for their message to be heard by Pharaoh. According to al-Tabari, the concept of soft and gentle talk in order to convey God’s message proposes respectfulness, such as using majestic titles when addressing Pharaoh in their speech.⁵ Another commentator of the Qur’an suggests that at first Pharaoh was inclined to accept Moses’ proposal, but his advisor, Haman, one of the great devious characters in the Qur’an, intervened and stopped him.⁶ According to a third commentator,

⁴ Ismail bin Kathir / Muhammad al-Eid (ed): *Al-Fusul fi al-Sirah*, Beirut 1986/7, p. 289.

⁵ Abu Jaf’ar al-Tabari / Ahmad Shakir (ed): *Jami’ al-Bayan*, vol. 18, Beirut 2000, p. 314.

⁶ Abu al-Layth Nasr Bin Muhammad al-Samarqandi / Ali Muhammad Muawwad (ed): *Bahr al-Ulun*, vol. 2, Beirut 1993, p. 400. Al-Smarqandi commentary states that Moses spoke to Pharaoh so gently about the afterlife, where there would be no aging and there would be an eternal kingdom and happiness, Pharaoh was amazed by this description of afterlife, but his

God's intention for Moses is to begin his speech in an encouraging manner so that Pharaoh will be softened and may listen to Moses' message. Considering this principle in the Qur'anic story of Moses, some mystics refer precisely to this divine conversation in their prayer: "Lord, You have described Pharaoh as your enemy and you asked your messenger, Moses, to speak to him gently. If this is your dealing with those who show animosity to You, what will be your dealing with those who love You?"⁷ Al-Qushayri, a prominent mystic commentator of the Qur'an, has an interesting approach to this verse on dialogue and gentleness. He speaks of a comparison between the Prophet of Islam and Moses, and thus suggests that since Moses was commanded to speak gently, the Prophet was commanded to speak in the most beautiful way also. He says, "the reason God commanded Moses and Aaron to speak gently to Pharaoh is because Pharaoh was the first person that they invited to the true religion of God. When the messengers of God invite people to God's message, softness and gentleness are required because it gives them [the people receiving the message] time for contemplation".⁸ The famous commentator of the Qur'an, al-Razi, interrogates Moses' speech, asking why God did command Moses to speak gently to someone who is in denial of God, namely Pharaoh? He responds to this question by hinting at some clues about the nature of human communication itself while focusing on immoral and oppressive people in particular. In all, there is an idea of respect whereby the parties involved benefit from each other rather than possibly turn to violence. Al-Razi says, "There are two possibilities with regard to the Divine command of gentle speech to Pharaoh. One, because Pharaoh was the one who brought up Moses, God commanded Moses to speak to him kindly and gently as a part of the observation

advisor, known in the Qur'an as Haman, tells him that "he is the lord and he has servants. He cannot be the servant of any lord". And eventually Pharaoh rejects Moses' request. "The gentle word is that Moses came to Pharaoh and told him: 'submit yourself to God and believe in the message that I have brought from Him. Worship the Lord of the worlds [if you do this] for you there will be a youth with no aging and a kingdom will never be taken away from you until you die and a joy of eating, drinking, and sexual desire until you die. When you die you will enter paradise'. It is said that Pharaoh became amazed with this, but he was not making any decisions without consulting his advisor Haman... Haman said to Pharaoh 'I thought that you had a good reason and a clear view. You are the Lord. Do you want others to be your lord? While you are worshiped, do you want to worship others?' This way Haman changed his mind, and Pharaoh rejected Moses".

⁷ Ali bin Muhammad al-Mawardi: *Al-Nukat Wa al-U'yun*, vol. 3, Beirut n.d., p. 405.

⁸ 'Abd al-Karim abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri: *Lataif al-Isharat*, vol. 2, Cairo n.d., p. 459.

of the rights that Pharaoh had over Moses because he raised him. This is to draw attention to the importance of the rights of parents”.⁹ According to Al-Razi, the second reason why God asked Moses to speak to Pharaoh in a gentle way is to decrease his anger and transgression. Al-Razi says: “It is among the traditions of dictators that they increase their transgressions and arrogance when the message is conveyed to them in a harsh way. The goal of the sending of the prophets is the attainment of the benefits and not the increasing of harm. For this reason God commanded Moses to speak to Pharaoh in a gentle way”.¹⁰ For Al-Qurtubi, Moses’ story is crucial for all believers throughout history. He says: “If Moses is commanded to speak to Pharaoh with gentle words, the people who are lower than Moses deserve more to follow Moses in this way in their addresses and doing good in their speeches. In fact this is exactly what God asks believers when He says ‘and you speak to people beautiful words” [(Q 2:83)].¹¹ Along the same lines, Ibn Kathir also discusses this Qur’anic story as a lesson for all believers. After mentioning the verse he says, “There is a great lesson in this Qur’anic verse and that is Pharaoh was at the highest level of transgression and arrogance, while Moses was a chosen of God among God’s creatures. Despite that, Moses is commanded not to speak to Pharaoh but only with kindness and gentleness”.¹² One of the most important reflections on this story is that some Islamic scholars, such as Said Nursi, have turned this principle of softness and gentleness into a general method in their writings. In his magnum opus, known as the *Treatises of Light*, Nursi uses this method, he says: “The method of the *Treatises of Light* is gentleness and softness of language”.¹³

This idea can be found in other Qur’anic stories that feature Moses, which, I argue, are the basis for a Jewish-Muslim dialogue. Regarding Moses and Pharaoh, the Qur’an says: “Then We sent, after them, Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his people, but they did them [Moses and Aaron] wrong; so you behold, how was the end of the workers of corruption! Moses said, ‘Pharaoh, I am a Messenger from the Lord of All-Being, worthy to say nothing regarding

⁹ Here it seems al-Razi is referencing the Ten Commandments. Abu ‘Abdillah Muhammad bin Omar Fakhr al-Din al-Razi: *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, vol. 22, Beirut 1999/2000, p. 52.

¹⁰ Al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 52.

¹¹ Abu ‘Abdillah Muhammad al-Qurtubi: *Al-Jami’ li Ahkam al-Qur’an*, vol. 11, Cairo 1964, p. 200.

¹² Ibn Kathir: *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Azim*, vol. 5, Riyadh 1999, p. 294.

¹³ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: *Risale-I Nur Külliyyati*, vol. 1, Istanbul 1996, p. 677.

God except the truth. I have brought a clear sign to you from your Lord; so send forth with me the Children of Israel” (Q 7:103–108). From this, the opening section of a much longer story can be deduced whereby two things become evident: Moses is righteous and Pharaoh is corrupt. This is why the Qur'an encourages people to be on the side of Moses and at the same time condemn Pharaoh's corruption. The belief in righteousness and the struggle against corruption is a general principle that can bring Muslims and Jews together. The Qur'an clearly states that corruption was a problem of that time and is, in fact, a human problem of all times. Here, the Qur'an presents Moses' stand against corruption without violence and harm. We see the seeds of Moses' non-violent struggle – a struggle, mediated by God and by Moses' faithfulness to the word of God.

Thus, Muslims' and Jews' relationship to faith and non-violence constitutes a strong basis for the foundations of a Jewish-Muslim dialogue. Despite his apparent weakness, Moses is able to stand against Pharaoh's power. Though he could have resorted to violence, he preferred the means of conversation in order to convey his message. Instead of remaining in Egypt, he escaped while, the tyrant, Pharaoh, followed him and his people. We see Moses' great confidence because he believes that God will not abandon him, that He will always be with him, and support him. When Moses' people saw Pharaoh and his army approaching, with great fear and frustration they said: “We are to be overtaken”. Moses responded: “Never. Surely my Lord is with me and He will guide me” (26:61–62). This is precisely why Moses' nonviolent struggle can be considered as a common ground between Muslims and Jews. It is true that Pharaoh drowned, yet not because Moses acted violently. In fact, it can be seen as Pharaoh's own self-destruction, his divine punishment for his arrogance and the oppression of Moses and his people. Moses and his people, on the other hand, were rescued by God.

In chapter 7, where the story of Moses is given in its greatest detail, certain elements that can be considered as points of discussion and dialogue between Jews and Muslims can be found. One of the themes in this Qur'anic chapter is Moses' great trust in God, which is known in Islamic mysticism as *tawakkul*. Against Pharaoh's oppression, Moses relied on God and showed his trust in God. The Pharaoh's magicians were supposed to defeat Moses, but he was strengthened by the miracles God performed. When the magicians witnessed these extraordinary events, they accepted the God of Moses. Pharaoh, in turn,

threatened them with crucifixion. What seems to be very important here is a prayer of the Pharaoh's magicians which is mentioned in the Qur'an. It reveals that they courageously converted to the religion of Moses by following what their heart felt and thus they rejected the Pharaoh's request. The Qur'an beautifully describes their response to Pharaoh's threat by saying: "You only take revenge on us because we believed in the signs of our Lord when we saw His miracles. Lord, grant us patience and let us die as *muslims* [as those who submitted themselves to the will of God]" (7:126).

Moses, despite having all negative forces turn against him, is hopeful. Hope is an important element of the mystical tradition of Islam. Pharaoh, whose level of aggression has reached its peak at this point in the story, while Moses has moved beyond the fear of oppression, is afraid that one of Israel's children will destroy his kingdom. Flatterers had encouraged Pharaoh to destroy and annihilate the Children of Israel and in one of the most unjust actions against the people of Moses, Pharaoh commanded that all male Israelite newborns be killed. One would expect Moses to lose all hope under these dire circumstances, yet he remained strong. This characteristic of Moses is praised in the Qur'an and highly compatible with the Qur'anic principle that only non-believers become hopeless of the mercy of God. Naturally, Moses remains hopeful because he is among the great believers of God. Thus, this hope of Moses, which is evident in the following verse, can be considered as a meeting point for Jews and Muslims. The Qur'an narrates Moses' response as follows: "Moses told his people to seek help from God and exercise patience. The earth belongs to Him and He has made it the heritage of whichever of His servants He chooses. The final success is for the pious ones" (7:128). Therefore, Moses was confident that corruption will end while piety would succeed. The success of corruption can only be temporarily affective, but the permanent success is for the piteous.

It is a divine principle that even God's messengers face some difficulty, but in the end, they will be able to master their opponents. In the Qur'an the conclusion of how Moses overcame Pharaoh is shown as follows: "We [God] took revenge on them, by drowning them in the sea, for denying Our signs and being heedless of them. We made the people who were deemed weak [by their oppressors], the inheritors of the eastern and western lands in which We had put Our blessings. Thus, the beautiful words of your Lord to the Children of Israel all came true because of the patience which they exercised. And

We destroyed all that Pharaoh and his people had built and were making” (7:136–137). While Pharaoh planned to exterminate the Children of Israel, it was he himself who was annihilated in the end. The just God does not allow for oppression to continue forever. The oppressor will eventually face the consequences of his or her actions. Since both Jews and Muslims are necessarily on the side of Moses, his actions should be a space for collaboration and mutual understanding for both religious groups. Thus, one can argue that this principle of hope and struggle against oppression, as seen in this Qur’anic story, can be considered a common ground for Muslims and Jews.

The most important place for a common ground between Jews and Muslims to emerge is the concept of monotheism. In fact, the Qur’an explicitly invites the People of the Book to establish a common platform over belief in the idea of the One God (Q 3:64). After God rescues the Children of Israel, once again, monotheism becomes the central focus of the story. After Pharaoh’s defeat and the rescue of Moses and his people from Egypt, another problems became apparent: that of paganism, of not worshiping the God that rescued them from the Pharaoh’s oppression. This struggle is emphasized in the story. Muslims and Jews are very concerned about the Oneness of God – a principle that simply cannot be compromised. For both God is not corporeal, He cannot be represented with material things, idolatry in any form therefore is strongly condemned in the Qur’an as well as in the Jewish tradition. The Qur’an says: “We helped the Children of Israel to cross the sea. They came to a people who worshipped idols. The Israelites demanded Moses to make gods for them like those of the idol-worshippers. Moses told them, ‘You are an ignorant people. What these people worship is doomed to be destroyed and their deeds are based on falsehood’” (7:138–139). As seen in the verse, forgetting the Creator of heaven and earth, the one God, while worshiping idols is ignorant. This is something that Jews and Muslims can agree on. Moses is upset about idols and idolatry. Whatever the attractions to idolatry may be, idols in any form do not deserve to be worshipped. Moreover, the Israelites are God’s chosen people; it is thus their moral imperative to only worship the One God. Muslims worldwide accept the Qur’anic principle of the divine favoring of the Children of Israel by choosing many prophets from them. Worshiping only the One God as a moral imperative is a significant principle in Islam as well. Once again, Muslims and Jews find a common ground. Moses in response to idolatry speaks to his people “Should I choose for you a lord other than God

who has favored you above all other people?" (7:140). The Children of Israel were chosen by God; Moses warned them when they made a mistake and this is true for Muslims also. Thus, being chosen by God does not mean that they were exempt from mistakes. Muslims and Jews are in agreement that any action against monotheism is to be rejected, no matter who committed the infidelity or whether a Muslim, Jew, or someone else committed it.

The Qur'an criticizes the people of Moses when they took the golden calf and considered it a deity. The verse says: "In Moses's absence, his people manufactured a hollow sounding calf out of their ornaments. Could they not see that it could not speak to them or provide them with any guidance? They gained only evil by worshipping the calf" (7:148). The relationship between the Divine and the people of Moses as well as between the Divine and the Islamic community, as indicated in the following verse, is based on Divine mercy. That is to say, people make mistakes but it is God's forgiveness that helps and rescues them. We see this in the prayer of the people of Moses. The Qur'anic verse says: "When they [the people of Moses] found that they had believed in the wrong thing, they regretfully said, "If our Lord will not have mercy on us and forgive us, we will certainly be lost" (7:149). To show the importance of monotheism, the Qur'an refers to Moses and the anger the worshipping of the golden calf as a deity by his people caused in him. He smashed the tablets and pulled his brother's head in order to stress the importance of the centrality of monotheism in the Jewish tradition; a tradition, which is entirely compatible with the Islamic understanding of monotheism. Accordingly, the Qur'an says: "When Moses returned to his people with anger and sorrow he said: 'What is this bad thing you have done after me? Why have you rushed the commandment of your Lord? He threw the tablets and took the head of his brother, pulling it to him" (7:150). Following this, Moses prays to God, a prayer which is frequently recited by Muslims, in daily prayers and elsewhere. "O Lord forgive my brother and me and enter us into Your mercy and You are the Most-Merciful of the merciful" (7:151). This and the many other prayers of Moses in the Qur'an can be seen as a common ground and sphere where a dialogue between Muslims and Jews can take place. In fact, the Qur'an discusses the Divine mercy held in the tablets' inscription when it says: "When Moses' anger subsided, he took up the tablets and written on them were mercy and guidance for those who are in awe of their Lord" (7:154). Similarly, we see another prayer of Moses in the Qur'an. Frustrated by

Pharaoh's oppression, he asks his people to pray to God for help and patience, and he himself supplicates to God by saying: "Lord, keep us away from the vicious people" (5:25). God accepted Moses' prayer and rescued him and his people from Pharaoh and his army, the Lord therefore deserves all praises and thanks for his bounties on the Children of Israel.

Here, we see that Moses reminds his people about the bounties of God, the only God. In the Islamic tradition, Muslims are also commanded to remember the bounties of God. This mystical concept, remembering the Divine gifts, constitutes yet another point of dialogue between Jews and Muslims. A Qur'anic verse in reference to Moses lists a number of Divine gifts given to the Children of Israel. "When Moses told his people, 'Recall God's favors to you. He made messengers and kings out of your own people and gave you what He had not given to others'" (5:20). Three major divine gifts seem to be emphasized in this verse; prophethood, that God made many prophets from the Children of Israel; kingship, that God made many kings from the Children of Israel; and other bounties that were not given to any other human beings except to the Children of Israel. Interestingly, the Qur'an here does not give the exact name of other bounties, but speaks of the uniqueness of these bounties which were not given to other people. In a later chapter of the Qur'an we can see Moses referring to the rescue of the Children of Israel. The verse says: "And when Moses said to his people, 'Remember God's blessing upon you when He delivered you from the folk of Pharaoh, who were visiting you with evil chastisement, slaughtering your sons, and sparing your women – and in that was a grievous trial from your Lord'" (14:6). Moses' reminder of the divine gift to the Children of Israel is similar to the Qur'an's addressing of Muslims to remember His gifts. Like the Children of Israel, Muslims, too, were weak and persecuted by the idol worshippers of Mecca; it was God, who freed them from their oppression. The Qur'anic verse says: "And remember when you were few, and He multiplied you; and behold, how was the end of the workers of corruption" (7:48).

If there is nothing in the Qur'an that can provide a common ground for Jews and Muslims, I argue that the above-outlined shared history is enough for a reference of dialogue. It is impossible to imagine a single Muslim who would take the side of Pharaoh. Islamically speaking, this is impossible. Since this is the case, Muslims and Jews can find a platform from which a dialogue and collaboration can emerge. Despite Moses' insistence on remembering

the bounties of God, he challenges his people by emphasizing that it is not God who needs their faith in him, but them who need to believe in the One God. Therefore, according to this Qur'anic verse, if all people on earth deny God, they would be unable to do any disadvantage to God because God is All-Sufficient and the Most-Praiseworthy. The Qur'anic verse says: "Moses told his people, 'If you and everyone on the earth turn to disbelief know that God is All-Sufficient and Praiseworthy'" (14:8).

Part of Moses' story is to show the importance of justice, and in particular, that despite any evil that a certain portion of the community committed, "there is among the people of Moses a community that is guided by truth and with truth they do justice" (7:159). The concept of justice mentioned here in its broadest sense includes that of justice towards the family, the community, the earth, etc. Needless to say, those who work for the upholding of justice will face challenges and difficulties. The story of Moses on this point too gives us guidance. The people of Moses pray, saying "In God we trust. Our Lord, make us not a temptation to the people of the evildoers" (10:85).

According to the Qur'anic narrative, Moses and Aaron are wholesome and they stand for anticorruption. The opposite of corruption is wholesomeness. Moses speaks of wholesomeness and he advises his brother to conduct himself this way; therefore, their strong opposition to corruption can be considered as another point of dialogue and collaboration between Muslims and Jews. Moses once again plays an important role for the establishment of such a dialogue. Perhaps, following the path of the corruption was so common in the time of Moses that he strongly emphasized when he appointed his own brother to not follow the same path. In this regard, the Qur'an says: "Moses had appointed his brother Aaron as his deputy among his people during his absence saying, 'Try to keep them on the path of wholesomeness and do not follow the way of the corrupt'" (7:142).

One can argue that this chapter of the Qur'an alone provides enough references to a common ground which can bring Muslims and Jews together. With regard to the story of Moses, let's turn to the Qur'anic verses again. It seems that Moses is in love with God, which, ultimately, is the highest level of understanding of monotheism. Being a prominent messenger of God, Moses asks God to show Himself to Moses. This Qur'anic story has several important dimensions: first, God is not corporal; secondly, God cannot be seen with the naked eye; and, thirdly, God may be reflected in something which constitutes a reference to the presence of God only. In this story, God is reflected

in a mountain. The mountain is destroyed and Moses faints. After he regains consciousness, he asks for forgiveness, repents and understands that he was not supposed to ask God to show Himself. Stating this story, the Qur'anic verse says: "When Moses came to our appointment and his Lord spoke to him. He asked the Lord to show Himself so that he could look at Him. The Lord replied: 'You can never see Me. But look at the mountain. If the mountain remains firm only then will you see Me.' When the Lord manifested His Glory to the mountain, He turned it into dust and Moses fell down upon his face senseless. After regaining his senses, Moses said, 'Lord, You are all Holy. I repent for what I asked you to do and I am the first to believe in You'" (7:143).

Moses, like all other prophets, was chosen by God. The concept of Moses being chosen by God is comparable to the Islamic concept of the Prophet of Islam being chosen by God. One of the Prophet's names is Mustafa (the chosen one); thus, the Qur'anic concept of Moses being a chosen one easily resonates in the minds of Muslims. Speaking of Moses, the Qur'anic verse says: "God said to Moses 'I have chosen you above the people by speaking to you and giving you My Message. Receive what I have given to you and give Us thanks'" (7:144). As far as the community of Islam is concerned, there is no concept of being chosen per se, however, there is the concept of being commissioned by God to command what is good and forbid what is evil. In this regard, the Qur'anic verse says: "You are the best nation ever brought forth to human kind, commanding honor and forbidding dishonor, and believing in God" (3:110). Although the verse does not speak of a literal choosing, it puts upon the shoulders of the Islamic community a duty that indicates a certain level of being chosen. This is very similar to the Israelites being those who carry the duty which was put upon their shoulders by God. Thus, God chose both Moses and Muhammad. The Jewish and the Islamic community carry a responsibility and a duty that was put on their shoulders by God. Such a communality provides and has to provide the ground for dialogue and collaboration between Muslims and Jews.

From the above mentioned aspects of the story of Moses in the Qur'an, one can conclude that Muslims and Jews have fundamental principles that can bring them together and contribute to dialogue and mutual understanding, as well as strengthen their relationships. My hope is that the points mentioned here will be a practical guide for the establishment of a new rapprochement between the people of these two traditions.