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## A Quantitative and Qualitative Corpus-Assisted Analysis of the Qurʾānic Discourse on أهل الكتاب ʾ" *Ahlulkitāb*" (the People of the Book)

### Abstract

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The present paper investigates the Qurʾānic discursive view of أهل الكتاب ʾ"*Ahlulkitāb*" (the People of the Book) and, in turn, the recommended kind of relations among the Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The study proceeds from a specific view of discourse which regards it as a repertoire of statements that constructs an object. Most of the studies conducted on the term 'People of the Book' in the Qurʾān tackle the Qurānic discourse form an exegetical point of view. The current paper attempts a qualitative corpus-assisted analysis of the discourse on the People of the Book presented firsthand in the Qurʾān Corpus. Hence, such corpus analysis tools as concordances, frequencies, and collocations are used to make sense of the linguistic patterns in the Qurʾānic corpus on the term under investigation. The paper concludes that Muslims are commanded to argue with the People of the Book in the best way, using all means of wisdom and logical reasoning, to fulfill basic religious obligations and enjoy living in peace. It also recommends that the People of the Book and Muslims enter into effective interfaith dialogue and enhance the bridges of mutual respect and cooperation to achieve peaceful coexistence and help sustain international peace and stability.

*Keywords*: Corpus-assisted analysis, interfaith dialogue, the People of the Book, Qurʾān Corpus

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**تحليل كمي وكيفي للخطاب القرآني عن *أهل الكتاب* مستعينا بأدوات معالجة لغويات المتون**

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تتناول هذه الدراسة الخطاب القرآني عن *أهل الكتاب* وما يرشد إليه فيما يتعلق بشكل العلاقة المثلى بين المسلمين والنصارى واليهود. وحيث إن معظم الدراسات السابقة قد تناولت موضوع *أهل الكتاب* في القرآن الكريم من المنظور التفسيري، فإن هذا البحث يهدف إلى تناول الخطاب القرآني عن *أهل الكتاب* بالتحليل الكمي والكيفي مسترشدا ومستعينا بأدوات معالجة لغويات المتون مثل: قوائم المرادفات المتعلقة بمصطلح أهل الكتاب، وعدد مرات تكرارها، ومتلازماتها اللفظية الواردة في المتن القرآني. وقد خلص التحليل الممنهج للتراكيب اللغوية البارزة والمتكررة في المتن القرآني عن *أهل الكتاب* إلى أن المسلمين مأمورون بمجادلتهم بالحسنى مستخدمين الحكمة والتفكير المنطقي للوفاء بما تدعوا إليه الديانات السماوية وللعيش في مجتمعات يسودها الأمن والسلام. ومن نتائج البحث أيضا دعوة الخطاب القرآني للمسلمين وأهل الكتاب أن يشرعوا في حوار الأديان الذي يهدف إلى الاحترام المتبادل ومد جسور التعاون بينهم فيما يعود على الجميع بالمنافع الدينية والدنيوية المتمثلة في تحقيق التعايش السلمي وتعزيز السلم والاستقرار العالمي.

*الكلمات الرئيسة:* التحليل بمساعدة أدوات معالجة المتون، حوار الأديان، أهل الكتاب، المتن القرآني

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**A Quantitative and Qualitative Corpus-Assisted Analysis of the Qurʾānic Discourse on**

**أهل الكتاب ʾ" *Ahlulkitāb*" (the People of the Book)**

## 1. Introduction

It is well known that the followers of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism constitute more than half of the world's population. All heavenly religions are also believed to inculcate in their followers the worship of Allah and peaceful coexistence with all human beings. For Muslims all over the world, the Qurʾān counts as a guiding divine reference that governs and regulates their religious and worldly relations. The present paper is intended to investigate the Qurʾānic discursive view of أهل الكتاب "ʾ*Ahlulkitāb*" (henceforth, the People of the Book) and, in turn, the principles governing the interrelations among Muslims, Christians, and Jews.  The term أهل الكتاب (the People of the Book), also translated as 'People of the Scripture', is used in this paper to refer exclusively to the Jews and Christians, as is acknowledged by most Qurʾān exegetes and researchers. To achieve this objective, the current paper attempts to answer the following questions:

1- What is the attitude of the Qurʾānic discourse towards the People of the Book?

2- What is the kind of relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book that

the Qurʾānic discourse recommends?

To begin with the identification of 'discourse', the term has a variety of definitions in the field of linguistics, but the current paper adopts a specific one explicated by Burr (1995:32), who regards it as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events." In this sense, the present research traces and attempts a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Qurʾānic 'statements' on the People of the Book to see how they are constructed and presented to the world in general and the guidelines that should govern their interrelations with Muslims in particular.

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## 2. Review of the literature

Most of the studies that have been carried out on the term أهل الكتاب (the People of the Book) so far concentrate on the Qurʾān exegetes' interpretations of the relevant verses. For instance, in his thesis entitled 'ʾAhl al-kitāb in the Qurʾān: *An analysis of selected classical and modern exegesis*,' Wahyudi (1997) attempted to find out the Qurʾānic view of the People of the Book by surveying different exegetes' interpretations of four relevant verses: (Q 3:64, 113, 114 and 115). It is to be noted that the initial Q stands for the Qurʾān. Wahyudi (1997:86) concluded that the Qurʾān "suggests bridges of understanding with the followers of other religions," that's because it "seeks to liberate mankind from the vain divisions of race and ethnocentricism." It invites both Muslims and the People of the Book to initiate and secure the success of interfaith dialogue, a dialogue which purports to seek the truth, stimulate mutual respect, and enhances effective cooperation (1997:95-101). Likewise, in a recent article entitled '"O People of the Book": An Exegetical Analysis of the ʾAhl al-Kitāb in Qurʾānic Discourse,' Hoffman (2018) investigated how the Qurʾān related itself to the two previous great religions. He concluded his study with the assertion that the Qurʾān "engages heavily in dialogue with the Jewish and Christian communities in order to establish and legitimize itself within, as a continuation of, and as the final solidification of Abrahamic-monotheism (2018:965)."

Two other dissertations stressed the importance of monotheism as a unifying factor for the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. One of them, entitled *'The Qur'anic Attitude Towards the People of the Book',* was carried out by Al-Ali in 2002. In this dissertation, Al-Ali surveyed the Qurʾānic vision of how Muslims should deal with the People of the Book, proceeding from the elevated position they hold for Prophets Moses and Jesus. Al-Ali concluded that the Qurʾān approves arguing with the People of the Book in a better way in order to convince them that "the monotheism of Abraham, Moses and Jesus is restored at the

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hands of the Prophet (2002:305)." The other dissertation is entitled *'People of the Book: An Analytical Study of Jews and Christians in the Qurʾān with Particular Reference to Contemporary Exegetical Discourse'.* In it, Hassan (2018) explored the exegetes' understanding and contextualization of the Qurʾānic verses on the People of the Book. Most exegetes agree on the fact that all monotheistic religions emanate from a joint divine source and that is why they have nearly the same objectives. For Hassan, those exegetes appreciate the kind of relationship with the People of the Book presented in the Qurʾānic discourse, which is "based on peace, respect and harmony, rather than conflict and clash (2018:240)."

As is shown above, the studies on the People of the Book in the Qurʾān have been eclectic and mostly exegetical. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no corpus-assisted study focusing primarily on the selected term in the Qurʾānic discourse has been conducted so far. The present paper is thus an attempt to fill in this research gap by surveying and analyzing the discourse on the People of the Book presented firsthand in the Qurʾān Corpus.

## 3. Theoretical framework

To answer the questions raised in this paper, a qualitative and quantitative corpus-assisted approach is applied to the analysis of the Qurʾānic discourse on the People of the Book, as this approach depends on naturally occurring language and hopefully leads to objective and reliable conclusions. In this respect, Egbert and Baker (2020:4) argue that "corpora can often provide a good amount of naturally occurring language data to answer at least some of the research questions in a study." Another important characteristic of the analyses assisted by investigating corpora is that they are both quantitative and qualitative. A corpus provides exact frequencies and real contexts of certain discourses, which researchers could focus on their salient and recurrent linguistic patterns to reach substantiated interpretations. As Zufferey (2020:1) puts it, corpus linguistics counts as "an empirical discipline *par excellence*, since it aims to draw conclusions based on the analysis of external data, rather than on the

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linguistic knowledge pertaining to researchers." Here also comes the role of the researcher who has to scan, absorb, and meticulously analyse the target discourse to find out convincing answers to his or her research questions. In this context, Friginal and Hardy (2021:2) contend that " the researcher and subsequent consumers of these studies must still interpret these corpus-based findings … as accurately and consistently as possible." Therefore, the researcher has used such tools of corpus analysis as frequencies, concordances, and collocations to make sense of the linguistic patterns in the Qurʾānic corpus on the People of the Book obtained via https://arabicorpus.byu.edu/. In fact, studying the frequency of occurrence helps analysts to easily notice the prominent linguistic features in the discourse under investigation. As Miller (2020:82) puts it, "frequency of occurrence can be used in understanding the relative salience of linguistic features in a text or discourse domain." Investigating concordances is also of paramount importance to discourse analysts. In corpus linguistics, a concordance is "a list of all the occurrences of a particular search term in a corpus, presented within the context that they occur in; usually a few words to the left and the right of the search term," as Baker (2006:71) defines it. Concordances make it available for analysts to see discourse segments in their real contexts and, consequently, be able to do quantitative and qualitative analyses objectively. In Wulff and Baker's (2020:175) own words, "the inspection of dozens of alphabetically sorted concordance lines enables patterns to emerge from a corpus that an analyst would be less likely to find from simply reading whole texts or scanning word lists." Besides frequency of occurrence and concordances, collocations, the phenomena of certain words tending to occur next to or in the company of each other, add further illumination to discourse understanding. Baker (2006:114) recommends collocational analysis, because it not only "provides a focus for our initial analysis," but also "gives us the most salient and obvious lexical patterns surrounding a subject, from which a number of discourses can be obtained."

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Halliday's (2014) transitive model, presented in his Functional Grammar, has proved helpful in understanding the meanings embodied in the structure of some relevant verses. This model shows how world views can be represented in the structure of the clause. The default order of one such transitive clause can run as follows: An Actor performs a Process that impacts a Goal. As Halliday (2014:334) contends, "the Actor is construed as bringing about the unfolding of the Process through time," and "the Goal is construed as being impacted by the Actor's performance of the Process." To illustrate his model, Halliday (2014:335) adduces the following example from the Bible: "The very next morning Noah and his sons **went** to the cypress forest **to cut down** the tallest trees for timber." The Actor here are Noah and his sons, who perform the material process of cutting down the tallest trees, which represent the Goal.

Unless otherwise mentioned, translations of the Qurʾānic verses in this paper were taken from Sahih International, with just one modification: replacing the translation of the term أهل الكتاب as 'the People of the Scripture' with 'the People of the Book,' which is much more common. This translation and the other ones used in this paper are available on https://corpus.quran.com/translation. Whenever an Arabic expression was used, the Library of Congress transliteration system was consistently employed, except if the expression was quoted with a different transliteration.

**4. Analysis of data**

Having a quick look at the concordance list of the term أهل الكتاب (the People of the Book) reveals that thirteen, out of the thirty-one, occurrences of the term in the Qurʾān Corpus are preceded by the word من (out of) to form the pattern من أهل الكتاب (out of the People of the Book). This most repeated pattern indicates that the identities of the People of the Book in general are not the same. They are not to be conceived of as having the same qualities or behaving identically. To clarify how they are different, the researcher conducted a close

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examination of the concordance for the pattern من أهل الكتاب (out of the People of the Book). It was found that, out of the thirteen occurrences, five are related to الذين كفروا (those who disbelieved), two are linked to طائفة (a party or faction), one to كثير (many), and the rest are left unspecified.



| 5 | من | ما يود الذين كفروا من أهل الكتاب ولا المشركين أن ينزل عليكم من خير من ربكم والله |
| 6 | من | ود كثير من أهل الكتاب لو يردونكم من بعد إيمانكم كفارا حسدا من عند أنفسهم |
| 7 | من | ودت طائفة من أهل الكتاب لو يضلونكم وما يضلون إلا أنفسهم وما يشعرون |
| 8 | من | وقالت طائفة من أهل الكتاب آمنوا بالذي أنزل على الذين آمنوا وجه النهار واكفروا آخره |
| 9 | من | ليسوا سواء من أهل الكتاب أمة قائمة يتلون آيات الله آناء الليل وهم يسجدون |

**Figure (1-A). Sample of the concordance for  أهل الكتاب  in arabiCorpus (Qur'an section)**

The dominant linguistic pattern in the verses on the disbelieving party of the People of the Book is that they co-occur with المشركين (the polytheists) and المنافقين (the hypocrites). Three Qurʾānic instances show some common traits of both the disbelieving People of the Book and the polytheists. In these verses Allah says,

(1) Neither *those*  مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَن يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُم *who disbelieve from the People of the Book* nor *the polytheists* wish that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord (Q 2:105)); (2)  لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ منفَكِّينَ حَتَّىٰ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ (*Those who disbelieved among the People of the Book* and *the polytheists* were not to be parted [from misbelief] until there came to them clear evidence (Q 98:1)); and (3)  إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا (Indeed, *they who disbelieved among the People of the Book* and *the polytheists* will be in the fire of Hell, abiding eternally therein (Q 98:6)).

Besides, one Qurʾānic instance reveals a juxtaposition of the disbelieving party of the People of the Book with the hypocrites. In this verse Allah says,

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِن قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنصُرَنَّكُمْ (Have you not considered *those who practice hypocrisy*, saying to their brothers *who have disbelieved among the People of the Book*, "If you are expelled, we will surely leave with you, and we will not obey, in regard to you, anyone - ever; and if you are fought, we will surely aid you) (Q 59:11)."

It is obvious that the Qurʾānic discourse differentiates between a mainstream believing party of the People of the Book and another disbelieving one. Those who disbelieve are given their right to be provided with such prerequisites of faith as a truthful messenger of Allah and a

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holy Book. This is apparently stated in the verse, "there came to them clear evidence (Q 98:1)". However, the consequences of their rejection of the message are postponed until the Hereafter (Q 98:6). As regards the disbelieving party's attitude towards the Muslims, they share the polytheists a hostile stance, which is primarily translated in their wish that Muslims would not be blessed with any divine privilege (Q 2:105). Their antagonism is also translated into maintaining close 'brotherly' relations with the hypocrites to form a united front against the Muslims (Q 59:11).

One more remarkable linguistic pattern, which combines a disbelieving party with another specific group out of the People of the Book, is that both of them constitute the Goal in a process whose Actor is Allah, according to the transitivity analysis proposed by Halliday (2014). In the first instance, Allah says,

هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِن دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ ۚ مَا ظَنَنتُمْ أَن يَخْرُجُوا ۖ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم مَّانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا ۖ وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ ۚ يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُم بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (It is *He* who *expelled the ones who disbelieved among the People of the Book* from their homes at the first gathering. You did not think they would leave, and they thought that their fortresses would protect them from Allah; but [the decree of] Allah came upon them from where they had not expected, and *He cast terror* into their hearts [so] they destroyed their houses by their [own] hands and the hands of the believers (Q 59:2)).

Likewise, in the other instance Allah says, وَأَنزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُم مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِن صَيَاصِيهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ (And *He brought down those who supported them among the People of the Book* from their fortresses and *cast* terror into their hearts (Q 33:26)).

To perceive the cause of the punishment these two parties of the People of the Book underwent requires delving into the context of these specific incidents. As Baker (2006:92) puts it, "taking account of the issues surrounding text production and reception, as well as the historical context of the subject under discussion are paramount in supporting the more linguistic-informed analysis of a corpus." In his well-known volume on the Qurʾānic science of the occasions of revelation, entitled *'Asbāb al-Nuzūl'*, al-Wāḥidi (2008) recalls why the first group was banished from Medina. In his commentary on the incident mentioned in verse

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(Q 59:2), al-Wāḥidi (2008:150) states that this verse was revealed about the Jewish tribe of Banu'l-Nadir, who signed a treaty with Prophet Muḥammad in which they agreed not to fight against him. However, when the Muslims were defeated at Uhud, the Jewish tribe members broke their pledge and showed enmity. As a result, they were surrounded and obliged to sign a settlement treaty in which it was agreed that they leave Medina. Their breaking of the pledge took the form of a conspiracy to assassinate Prophet Muḥammad. In her book, *Islam: A Short History*, Armstrong (2002:21) further asserts that "Muhammad tried to reassure the Nadir, and made a special treaty with them, but when he discovered that they had been plotting to assassinate him they too were sent into exile." As for the incident in verse (Q 33:26), it is reported that it concerns a fatal mistake committed by another Jewish tribe called Banū Qurayẓah. They were also under the same obligation to defend Medina as co-citizens with the Muslims. But, as Armstrong (2002:21) confirms, they "sided with Mecca during the Battle of the Trench, when for a time it seemed that the Muslims faced certain defeat." For this treacherous act, the Prophet asked them to choose an arbiter to judge their case. They chose Saʿd ibn Muʿādh, who decreed that their men should be killed. In this connection, Lings (1983:232) observes that "Saʿd's judgement was no doubt directed mainly against their treachery," and adds that such a decree "coincided exactly with Jewish law as regards the treatment of a besieged city, even if it were innocent of treachery." It is crystal clear by now that these two incidents have nothing to do with a clash between two religions. Rather, these can be called socio-political faults that could be committed by some rebel groups living in a pluralist community. Therefore, those disciplinary measures were taken for the sake of maintaining home security, in terms of politics. They didn't indicate any hostility towards the Jews in particular or the People of the Book in general. As Armstrong (2002:21) confirms, "the [Quran] continued to revere Jewish prophets and to urge Muslims to respect the People

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of the Book. Smaller Jewish groups continued to live in Medina, and later Jews, like Christians, enjoyed full religious liberty in the Islamic empires."

Two other occurrences of the pattern من أهل الكتاب (out of the People of the Book) are linked to the quantity words كثير (many) and طائفة (a faction), and both of them contain the linguistic formula ود (wish), which indicates their bad intentions. In the first verse, Allah says, وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُم مِّن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِندِ أَنفُسِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ (*Many* of the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy from themselves [even] after the truth has become clear to them (Q 2:109)). And in the second, وَدَّت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (*A faction of the People of the Book wish* they could mislead you. But they do not mislead except themselves, and they perceive [it] not (Q 3:69)). The two wishes are rather similar concerning the Muslim believers: the former is يَرُدُّونَكُم كُفَّارًا (turn you back to disbelief) and the latter يُضِلُّونَكُمْ (mislead you). A third occurrence of the pattern طائفة من أهل الكتاب (a faction of the People of the Book) foregrounds the same wish towards the Muslims لعلهم يرجعون (so that they might abandon their religion). This is obvious in the verse: وَقَالَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوا آخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (And *a faction of the People of the Book* say [to each other], "Believe in that which was revealed to the believers at the beginning of the day and reject it at its end that *perhaps they will abandon their religion* (Q 3:72)"). In fact, the co-text of these instances reveals the Qurʾānic discourse answer to these 'wishes'. In the first place, the Qurʾān asserts that these wishes will have no effect on Muslims; rather, they could be detrimental merely to those who harbour them, as in "they do not mislead except themselves (Q 3:69)." Secondly, the source of guidance in all heavenly religions is Allah, from Whom all believers at all times and places should seek help. That's why to those who wish Muslims would "abandon their religion (Q 3:72)" the answer follows it, confirming that قل إن الهدى هدى الله (Say (O Muḥammad ), Indeed, the [true] guidance is the guidance of Allah), and that إن

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الفضل بيد الله يؤتيه من يشاء (Indeed, [all] bounty is in the hand of Allah - He grants it to whom He wills (Q 3:73)). Thirdly, Muslims are commanded to counter these psychological attitudes with observing good manners, which guarantee living in peace with those who adopt them. This is self-evident in the first instance above, in which Allah orders Muslims to فاعفوا واصفحوا حتى يأتي الله بأمره (pardon and overlook until Allah delivers His command (Q 2:109)).

Moreover, the linguistic pattern من أهل الكتاب (out of the People of the Book) recurs in two significant instances that contain the structure مَن (he/they who) followed by such verbs in the imperfect tense, as تَأْمَنْه (you entrust him), يُؤَدِّهِ (return it), and لَا يُؤَدِّه (not return it), يُؤْمِنُ (believe), and لَا يَشْتَرُونَ (do not exchange), which corresponds to the English (simple or progressive) present tense. In the first verse, Allah says,

> وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِدِينَارٍ لَّا يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا
> (And *among the People of the Book* is *he who*, if you *entrust* him with a great amount [of wealth], he *will return* it to you. And among them is *he who*, if you *entrust* him with a [single] silver coin, he *will not return* it to you unless you are constantly standing over him [demanding it] (Q 3:75)).

In the second, Allah says,

> وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَن يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتَرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلا
> (And indeed, *among the People of the Book* are *those who believe* in Allah and what was revealed to you and what was revealed to them, [being] humbly submissive to Allah. They *do not exchange* the verses of Allah for a small price (Q 3:199)).

The same linguistic pattern recurs once more with a slight variation: من أهل الكتاب (out of the People of the Book), followed by a noun أمة (a community), then by a succession of simple present verbs, as in يَنْهَوْنَ (enjoin), يَأْمُرُونَ (reciting), يَسْجُدُونَ (prostrating), يُؤْمِنُونَ (believe), يَتْلُون (forbid), and يُسَارِعُونَ (hasten). This is manifested in the verse:

> لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِى الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُوْلَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (They are not [all] the same; *Among the People of the Book* is *a community* standing [in obedience], *reciting* the verses of Allah during periods of the night and *prostrating* [in prayer].They *believe* in Allah and the Last Day, and they *enjoin* what is right and *forbid* what is wrong and *hasten* to good deeds. And those are among the righteous (Q 3:113,114)).

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In Qurʾānic Arabic, the use of verbs in the imperfect tense has its significance for showing the characteristics of another category of the People of the Book.  According to Abu-Chacra (2007:106), the imperfect tense "expresses an incomplete, continuous or habitual action or an ongoing state." Similarly, Quirk *et al*. (1985:179) think that in English the "STATE PRESENT," which is used without reference to specific time, "includes general timeless statements, or so-called 'eternal truths.'" Hence, the use of the verbs in the imperfect tense in the above instances sheds light on some personal traits of two other groups of the People of the Book. In the first case, verse (Q 3:75), some people will return a great sum of money if they are entrusted with it, which indicates that they are so honest and trustworthy. Others will not return the least amount of money they are entrusted with unless they are obliged to do so, which indicates their meanness and untrustworthiness. These 'habitual actions' of the first kind of people are praiseworthy, while those of the second kind are deplorable. The Qurʾānic discourse gently encourages the second kind to seek moral perfection, as in  من أوفى بعهده واتقى فإن الله يحب المتقين (whoever fulfills his commitment and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him (Q 3:76)).  In the second case, verses (Q 3:199, 113,114), the habitual actions and ongoing states of such kind of the People of the Book entitle them to be role models. They يؤمنون بالله (*believe* in Allah), وما أنزل إليك (what was revealed to you [Prophet Muḥammad ]), وما أنزل إليهم (what was revealed to them), ولا يشترون بآيات الله ثمنا قليلا (*do not exchange* the verses of Allah for a small price), يتلون آيات الله (*recite* the verses of Allah), يؤمنون بالله واليوم الآخر (*believe* in Allah and the Last Day), يأمرون بالمعروف (*enjoin* what is right), ينهون عن المنكر (*forbid* what is wrong), and يسارعون في الخيرات (*hasten* to good deeds). These are exactly the same qualities required of the faithful Muslim believers. Therefore, they are acclaimed for being من الصالحين (among the righteous).

يا أهل الكتاب (O People of the Book) is another frequent pattern in the remaining eighteen occurrences of أهل الكتاب (People of the Book) in the Quʾrān. This vocative structure is used as

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a start in twelve verses. Admittedly, the pragmatic function of a vocative structure is to attract

the attention of the addressee to the message conveyed by the speaker. In English, a vocative

is "either a CALL, drawing the attention of the person or persons addressed, singling them

out from others in hearing …or an ADDRESS, expressing the speaker's relationship or

attitude to the person or persons addressed," as Quirk *et al*. (1985:773) point out. Similarly, in

Arabic a vocative is used to "attract the addressee's attention so as to listen carefully to what

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|---|---|---|---|
| يا | يا أهل الكتاب لم تلبسون الحق بالباطل وتكتمون الحق وأنتم تعلمون | 21 |
| يا | قل يا أهل الكتاب لم تكفرون بآيات الله والله شهيد على ما تعملون | 22 |
| يا | قل يا أهل الكتاب لم تصدون عن سبيل الله من آمن تبغونها عوجا وأنتم | 23 |
| يا | يا أهل الكتاب لا تغلوا في دينكم ولا تقولوا على الله إلا الحق | 24 |
| يا | يا أهل الكتاب قد جاءكم رسولنا يبين لكم كثيرا مما كنتم تخفون من | 25 |

**Figure (1-B). Sample of the concordance for** يا أهل الكتاب **"*yā ʾAhlalkitāb*" in arabiCorpus (Qur'an section)**

is going to be said in order to achieve the pragmatic function intended by the addresser," as

Maalej (2010:150) views. Therefore, a closer examination of what follows the pattern يا أهل

الكتاب *"yā ʾAhlalkitāb"* (O People of the Book) clarifies the important messages directly

addressed to the followers of the two great religions- Jews and Christians.

   Five, out of the twelve, occurrences of يا أهل الكتاب (O People of the Book) show another

accompanying pattern: لم (why). The two patterns appear in the following verses:

> (1) يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَاةُ وَالْإِنجِيلُ إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ *(O People of*
> *the Book, why* do you argue about Abraham while the Torah and the Gospel were not
> revealed until after him? Then will you not reason? (Q 3:65)); (2) يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ
> بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ *(O People of the Scripture, why* do you disbelieve in the verses of
> Allah while you witness [to their truth]? (Q 3:70)); (3) يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ
> وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ *(O People of the Book, why* do you confuse the truth with
> falsehood and conceal the truth while you know [it]? (Q 3:71); (4) قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ
> تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ (Say, "O People of the Book, *why* do you
> disbelieve in the verses of Allah while Allah is Witness over what you do?" (Q 3:98));
> and (5) قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَأَنتُمْ شُهَدَاءُ (Say, "*O People*
> *of the Book, why* do you avert from the way of Allah those who believe, seeking to
> make it [seem] deviant, while you are witnesses [to the truth]? (Q 3:99)).

These verses constitute five questions, starting with the question word لم (why). The sixth

occurrence of the pattern يا أهل الكتاب (O People of the Book) displays another question, but

with a different question word: هل (do). This is shown in the verse: قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ هَلْ تَنقِمُونَ مِنَّا

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إِلَّا أَنْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلُ  (Say, "*O People of the Book, do* you resent us except [for the fact] that we have believed in Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed before? (Q 5:59)).

   Intuitively, the recurrent use of questioning here is not for getting direct answers; rather, it has its rhetorical significance. In his well-substantiated study, *The Rhetorical Question as a Discursive and Stylistic Device in the Quran,* Badarneh (2003) explains how the 809 rhetorical questions used in the Qurʾān are to be dealt with as indirect speech acts, which have multiple functions according to their contexts. As for the five occurrences of the pattern لِمَ (why), Badarneh (2003:66) concludes that: "*lima*-rhetorical questions in general convey the assertion 'there is no (good) reason/ justification/ rationale for doing/saying x' and 'therefore I reproach/criticize (you) for doing/saying x.'"  Therefore, the important divine message to the People of the Book is that the following actions are in no way justified: Arguing about Abraham, disbelieving in the verses of Allah, confusing the truth with falsehood and concealing the truth while knowing [it], and averting from the way of Allah those who believe. Using this pattern of rhetorical questions five times, the Qurʾānic discourse thus criticizes the People of the Book vehemently for their unjustifiable attitude towards the Prophet of Islam and his message, which are mentioned in their Scriptures. According to the translation of Mohsin Khan, the word آيَاتِ is rendered as "the Verses about Prophet Muḥammad SAW present in the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)," in verse (Q 3:70), and as the divine "proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc."  in verse (Q 3:98). Regarding the use of هل (do)-*rhetorical Questions*, as in verse (Q 5:59) above, Badarneh (2003:53) argues that they "seem to have a stronger emphatic effect on the statement about which the question is asked," and adds that they "convey invariably the illocutionary force of a negative assertion." Hence, the rhetorical question in verse (Q 5:59) emphasizes the fact that the antagonistic attitude adopted by the People of the Book towards Muslims due to their belief in

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Allah and in the revealed Scriptures, including the Torah and the Gospel, is based on prejudice

rather than justice.

Two, out of the remaining six, occurrences of ‹ يا أهل الكتاب › (O People of the Book) display

another accompanying pattern: لا (do not). In these verses Allah says:

> "قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِن قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا (1) عَن سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ (Say, "O People of the Book, *do not* exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth and *do not* follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the soundness of the way" (Q 5:77));
> يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (2) and وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِّنْهُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ ۚ انتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ أَن يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (O People of the Book, *do not* commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And *do not* say, "Three"; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs (Q 4:171)).

The pattern: لا (do not), used above, is called a prohibition particle, in terms of syntax. Both

English and Arabic use various syntactic and semantic forms to perform the speech act of

prohibition. In their study on the same topic, al-Saaidi *et al.* (2013:98) point out that in

English "[a] prohibition speech act may be used to express various [impositive] illocutionary

forces such as warning, forbidding, and threatening." They also found out that in Arabic the

illocutionary forces of a prohibition speech act can be forbidding, abstention, prayer, request,

encouragement, expressing consequence, contempt, counselling, gratitude and cooperation,

and reprimanding (2013:102). The illocutionary forces of the five prohibition speech acts

used in the verses above could thus be understood as *forbidding* the People of the Book to

exceed the limits in their religion beyond the truth of the Oneness of Allah, *encouraging* them

not to follow others who have gone astray, *reprimanding* them for saying untruths about

Allah, and *asking* them to *abstain* from saying 'Three', confirming that Allah is One, and that

the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah.

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Other two, out of the remaining four, occurrences of يا أهل الكتاب (O People of the Book) exhibit a different accompanying pattern: قد جاءكم رسولنا يبين لكم (there has come to you Our Messenger to make clear to you). In the first of these, Allah says: يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ (O People of the Book, لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ ۚ قَدْ جَاءَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ *there has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you* much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. *There has come to you* from Allah a light and a clear Book) (Q 5:15). And in the second, He says, يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلَىٰ فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا جَاءَنَا مِن بَشِيرٍ وَلَا نَذِيرٍ ۖ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُم بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ (O People of the Book, there has come to you *Our Messenger to make clear to you* [the religion] after a period [of suspension] of messengers, lest you say, "There came not to us any bringer of good tidings or a warner." But there has come to you a bringer of good tidings and a warner) (Q 5:19)).

The use of the particle لقد *"laqad"*, which is not usually translated into English, four times in these two verses is significant. As Badawi *et al*. (2004:366) put it, *"qad* reinforces the perfective aspect of this verb form: ***qad ḥaqqaqtu** bi-l-fiʿli* قد حققت بالفعل 'I **have** actually **achieved**.'" In similar terms, Abu Chakra (2007:82) points out that the purpose of this particle is "to emphasize the completion or realization of the action of the verb, like adding the corroborating auxiliary 'do', the adverb 'really' or 'already'." Therefore, the use of this particle in the pattern 'قد جاءكم رسولنا يبين لكم' (there has come to you Our Messenger to make clear to you) *emphasizes* that Prophet Muḥammad has already been sent as a Messenger of Allah to you (O People of the Book) to make clear all matters of religion. Some of these issues were mentioned in their Scriptures, others would be revealed anew to them by Prophet Muḥammad, who is described here as رسولنا (Our Messenger), نور (a light), بشير (a bringer of good tidings) and نذير (a warner), and by the Qurʾān, which was revealed as كتاب مبين (a clarifying Book). The confirmation is thus on the blessing of the divine guidance being

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resumed to the People of the Book after a period of suspension of messengers, the last of

whom was Prophet Jesus.

The two remaining occurrences of يا أهل الكتاب (O People of the Book) show an

accompanying pattern that recurs in four above-mentioned verses: قل (say). In these verses,

Allah says, (1) قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (*Say, "O*

*People of the Book*, you are [standing] on nothing until you uphold [the law of] the Torah, the

Gospel, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord" (Q 5:68)); and (2)

> قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا
> مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (*Say, "O People of the Book*, come to a word
> that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not
> associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah." But
> if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]"
> (Q 3:64).)

In Arabic rhetoric, the use of a verb in the imperative has its pragmatic significance. As

Abdul-Raof (2006:117) points out, "imperative informing speech acts can express one of the

following pragmatically distinct significations such as: a supplication, guidance, choice,

challenge, threat, sarcasm, and plea." Abdul-Raof (2019:106) also makes two important

observations concerning the Qurʾānic use of the verb قل (say) in the imperative: (1) "it is an

informing speech act (which) does not qualify to be true or false. Thus, it is a skilful

technique to force the opponent to accept the premise and believe it as true;" and (2) "the

stylistic mechanism of foregrounding provides the illocutionary force of specificity." In the

light of these observations, the pattern قل (say) that recurs in six verses signifies divine

guidance to Prophet Muḥammad with regard to the People of the Book, who are

foregrounded for specificity. Verse (Q 5:68) is, thus, understood as guiding the People of the

Book specifically to uphold the law of the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to

them from their Lord. Similarly, verse (Q 3:64) is perceived as an invitation sent out

particularly to the People of the Book to come to a common word between them and Muslims

for the good of all parties.

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In fact, verse (Q 3:64) is perceived by many scholars and academics to be the basis upon which the followers of the three Abrahamic religions could build their interfaith dialogue. Such dialogue aims at realizing two main objectives: To worship Allah alone, and to cooperate in all that is in the best interest of humanity. In his examination of the concept of أهل الكتاب (the People of the Book) from the Qur'ānic point of view, Wahyudi (1997) adduces the views of different Qur'ān exegetes, who focus particularly on the words كلمة سواء (a common word), mentioned in verse (Q 3:64). He starts with al-Tabari, as cited in Wahyudi (1997:46), who interprets the common word to mean "the just word". At the end of his commentary on this verse, al-Tabari pays tribute to the religious tolerance that this verse inspires. He declares that "if the People of the Book do not want to answer the Prophet's call to the just word, it is enough for them to acknowledge Muslims as people who have submitted to the will of God" (1997:47). Then, al-Zamakhshari, as cited in Wahyudi (1997:48), interprets it as "a common word on which the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'ān would agree". Finally, Wahyudi refers to the viewpoint held by Muḥammad 'Abduh, cited in Wahyudi (1997:50), who interprets the common word as "worshipping Allah alone." For 'Abduh, the Qur'ān calls both Jews and Christians to abide by the common word in this sense, because "Moses and Jesus, like Muḥammad, had exhorted people to worship God alone, which is the original message of all prophets." Wahyudi also considers the word تعالوا (come), mentioned in verse (Q 3:64), to be "a polite, mild but emphatic call upon people of faith for dialogue to maintain mutual understanding and mutual assistance, supporting each other in goodness (1997:101)."

A case in point relating to the common word, mentioned in verse (Q 3:64), is an initiative embodied in a recent message sent out by a hundred and thirty-eight Muslim scholars to their Christian counterparts. The message entitled 'A Common Word Between Us and You' was issued on October 13th, 2007, and it has since brought about favourable responses and

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promising results in terms of mutual respect, cooperation and understanding on the part of

leading Muslim and Christian figures. The details of the initiative and its repercussions were

published by The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (henceforth the RAIIT) in

2009. In their statement, the Muslim scholars identify worshipping Allah alone as a

fundamental unifying factor to the believing Jews, Christians, and Muslims, in the following

terms:

> The Two Greatest Commandments are an area of common ground and a link between
> the Qurʾān, the Torah and the New Testament. … For the Shema in the Torah, starts:
> (Deuteronomy 6:4) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! Likewise,
> Jesus said: (Mark 12:29) "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the
> LORD our God, the LORD is one". Likewise, God says in the Holy Qurʾān: Say: He,
> God, is One. God, the Self Sufficient Besought of all. (Al-Ikhlas, 112:1-2). Thus, the
> Unity of God, love of Him, and love of the neighbour form a common ground upon
> which Islam and Christianity (and Judaism) are founded (the RAIIT:28).

The Muslim scholars, then, drew on the content of verse (Q 3:64) to offer the following

initiative to their Christian counterparts:

> As Muslims, and in obedience to the Holy Qurʾān, we ask Christians to come together
> with us on the common essentials of our two religions … that we shall worship none
> but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take
> others for lords beside God…(Aal 'Imran 3:64). Let this common ground be the basis
> of all future interfaith dialogue between us (the RAIIT:33).

They ask Christians to collaborate with Muslims for translating the common ground between

them into a joint fruitful action. Their argument is that "Christians and Muslims reportedly

make up over a third and over a fifth of humanity respectively," therefore, working together

under the umbrella of a common word will surely help these two religious communities to

contribute effectively to "meaningful peace around the world" (the RAIIT:34-5). They sum

up their invitation in the following words: "Let our differences not cause hatred and strife

between us. Let us vie with each other only in righteousness and good works. Let us respect

each other, be fair, just and kind to one another and live in sincere peace, harmony and

mutual good will (the RAIIT:35-6).

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One of the positive responses to this invitation, which came from over three hundred leading Christian Scholars, was published as a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* on November 18ᵗʰ, 2007. In their own words, "We extend our own Christian hand in return, so that together with all other human beings we may live in peace and justice as we seek to love God and our neighbors" (the RAIIT:83). They also express their pledge to commit themselves "to labor together in heart, soul, mind and strength for the objectives you so appropriately propose" (the RAIIT:90). Another important response came from His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russia on April 14ᵗʰ, 2008. In it, he assigned some possible practical domains of Christian-Muslim cooperation such as "safeguarding the role of religion in public life, struggling with the defamation of religion, overcoming intolerance and xenophobia, protecting holy places, preserving places of worship and promoting joint peace initiatives" the RAIIT:121). A further response that stressed the importance of Christian-Muslim concerted work was issued by the United Methodist Council of Bishops on January 5ᵗʰ, 2009. They expressed their conviction that "in a time of war, militarism and terrorism, global warming and environmental degradation, extreme poverty and pandemic disease, people of all faiths are called to join hands in common efforts in defense of the creation of God" (the RAIIT:209). Finally, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI expressed his response in his address to the participants in the first seminar of the Catholic-Muslim forum held at Clementine Hall on November 6ᵗʰ, 2008. The Pope concentrated on another domain of joint work by confirming that "there is a great and vast field in which we can act together in defending and promoting the moral values which are part of our common heritage" (the RAIIT:234-5).

Now there are still six occurrences of أهل الكتاب (People of the Book) in the Qurᵓān that need to be examined for significant common linguistic patterns. لو (If) is one such pattern that recurs in two verses. In them, Allah says: (1)  وَلَوۡ آمَنَ أَهۡلُ الۡكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيۡرًا لَّهُم (*If the People of the*

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وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا *Book* believed, it would be better for them (Q 3:110)); and (2)

"عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (And *if only the People of the Book* believed and feared Allah,

We would remove from them their misdeeds and admit them into Gardens of Pleasure [*my*

*translation*]) (Q 5:65)." In fact, لو (if) is used in both Arabic and English to express unreal or

hypothetical conditions. As Abu Chakra (2007:311) explains, *"law"* (if) is used "for unreal

condition," and it "refers to the past or future," as in " لَوْ دَرَسَ لَنَجَحَ If he had studied, he would

have succeeded. OR, if he studied, he would succeed." The use of (if) has rhetorical

significance. Abdul-Raouf (2006:163-4) points out that لو *"law"* "occurs in hypothetical

sentences," and it, therefore, "implies that what is supposed either does not take place or is

not likely to do so." However, when (if) is used for present and future reference, it still

implies that the action talked about could take place at any time. In this respect, Quirk *et al*.

(1985:1010) point out that with present and future reference in structures like "*If* she

(*tried/were to try*) harder next time, she *would pass* the examination," the meaning may be

merely one of negative expectation or assumption, but the positive meaning is not being ruled

out completely. In the light of these implications, verses (Q 3:110) and (Q 5:65) are perceived

to give the meaning that although the People of the Book haven't yet showed complete belief

in Allah and fear of Him, it is still possible for them to do so at present or in the future so that

it would be in their best interest in this life, and they would be admitted into Gardens of

Pleasure in the Hereafter.

Moreover, a remarkable pattern in three other occurrences is manifest in directing the

divine discourse to أهل الكتاب (the People of the Book) together with the Prophet of Islam in

one verse and with the Muslims in the other two. The former is obvious in the verse: يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ

الْكِتَابِ أَن تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ ۚ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرِنَا اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً *(The People of the*

*Book* ask *you* to bring down to them a book from the heaven. But they had asked of Moses

[even] greater than that and said, "Show us Allah outright") (Q 4:153)." The latter is shown in

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the verses: (1) لَّيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِۗ مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ (It is not your fancies, nor the fancies of the People of the Book. Whosoever does evil shall be recompensed for it, [*Arberry's translation*) (Q 4:123)); and (2)

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْۖ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُنَا وَإِلَٰهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (And *do not* argue with *the People of the Book* except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among *them*, and *say*, "We believe in that which has been revealed to *us* and revealed to *you*. And *our* God and *your* God is one; and *we* are Muslims [in submission] to Him" (Q 29:46)).

In verse (Q 4:153), Allah addresses Prophet Muḥammad, telling him that the People of the Book would react to his message not so challengingly as they had responded to the message of Moses. The implication is that Prophet Muḥammad was advised to show as much wisdom and patience as possible on dealing with the People of the Book, the same way followed by the previous Messengers sent to them. In verse (Q 4:123), Allah also addresses Muslims, teaching them a moral: In case of doing evil, both Muslims and the People of the Book are equal before Allah, and whosoever does evil shall be recompensed for it. The divine address to Muslims continues in verse (Q 29:46), instructing them to argue with the People of the Book in the best way, and to express and make known to them their firm belief in all revealed Scriptures and in the Oneness of Allah. The three verses, thus, advise Muslims, including Prophet Muḥammad, on the best way to realise peaceful coexistence with the People of the Book and how to tackle religious matters of mutual interest.

It was expected that the words التوراة (the Torah) and الإنجيل (the Gospel), being the exact names of the two holy Books to which their followers are attributed, would recur more frequently in the frequency list of the term أهل الكتاب (the People of the Book). However, it was found that they were mentioned only twice, as in the verses (Q 3:65; Q 5:68). According to the Qurʾān Corpus, the word التوراة (the Torah) recurs eighteen times and الإنجيل (the Gospel) twelve. The fact is that "sometimes what is *not present* in a frequency list can be as revealing as what is frequent," as Baker (2006:57) argues. Therefore, in the following section,

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the researcher has surveyed the apparent linguistic patterns accompanying both words in the concordance list to see how they add to the discourse on the People of the Book.



| | sort word | 10 words after | word | 10 words before |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | أقاموا | والإنجيل وما أنزل إليهم من ربهم لأكلوا من فوقهم ومن | التوراة | ولو أنهم أقاموا |
| 2 | أنزلت | والإنجيل إلا من بعده أفلا تعقلون | التوراة | يا أهل الكتاب لم تحاجون في إبراهيم وما أنزلت |
| 3 | أنزلنا | فيها هدى ونور يحكم بها النبيون الذين أسلموا للذين هادوا | التوراة | إنا أنزلنا |
| 4 | تقيموا | والإنجيل وما أنزل إليكم من ربكم وليزيدن كثيرا منهم ما | التوراة | قل يا أهل الكتاب لستم على شيء حتى تقيموا |
| 5 | نُنزل | قل فأتوا بالتوراة فاتلوها إن كنتم صادقين | التوراة | إلا ما حرم إسرائيل على نفسه من قبل أن نُنزل |

**Figure (2). Sample of the concordance for التوراة " ʾattawrāh" in arabiCorpus (Qur'an section)**

The first common pattern is that *Allah* is the One Who نزل (revealed/ sent down) and gave promises in *the Torah, the Gospel*, and *the Qurʾān*. In this regard, Allah says, (1) نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ من قبل هدى للناس (*He* has *sent down* upon you, [O Muḥammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And *He revealed the Torah and the Gospel*. Before, as guidance for the people (Q 3:3-4)); and (2)

> إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ۚ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ (Indeed, *Allah* has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true *promise* [binding] upon *Him* in *the Torah* and *the Gospel* and *the Qurʾān* (Q 9:111)).



| | sort word | 10 words after | word | 10 words before |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | أهل | بما أنزل الله فيه ومن لم يحكم بما أنزل الله | الإنجيل | وليحكم أهل |
| 2 | التوراة | | والإنجيل | نزل عليك الكتاب بالحق مصدقا لما بين يديه وأنزل التوراة |
| 3 | التوراة | إلا من بعده أفلا تعقلون | والإنجيل | يا أهل الكتاب لم تحاجون في إبراهيم وما أنزلت التوراة |
| 4 | التوراة | وما أنزل إليهم من ربهم لأكلوا من فوقهم ومن تحت | والإنجيل | ولو أنهم أقاموا التوراة |
| 5 | التوراة | وما أنزل إليكم من ربكم وليزيدن كثيرا منهم ما أنزل | والإنجيل | قل يا أهل الكتاب لستم على شيء حتى تقيموا التوراة |
| 6 | التوراة | يأمرهم بالمعروف وينهاهم عن المنكر ويحل لهم الطيبات ويحرم عليهم | والإنجيل | يتبعون الرسول النبي الأمي الذي يجدونه مكتوبا عندهم في التوراة |

**Figure (3). Sample of the concordance for الإنجيل " ʾalʾinjīl" in arabiCorpus (Qur'an section)**

The holy Books are also described as having هدى (guidance) and نور (light). Such guidance and light were provided as a permanent source of fair judgement among, as well as enlightening instruction to, the followers of the two religions. Hence, Allah says, (1)

> إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرَاةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَار (Indeed, We sent down *the Torah*, in which was *guidance* and *light*. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] *judged* by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars (Q 5:44)); and (2) وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (and We gave him *the Gospel*, in which was *guidance* and *light* and confirming that

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which preceded it of *the Torah* as *guidance* and *instruction* for the righteous (Q 5:46)).

Another common pattern links the two Holly Books to the idea of حكم ( both as an act of judging and as a rule of judgement), practised by the scholars of Judaism and Christianity. This is shown in two verses: (1) وَكَيْفَ يُحَكِّمُونَكَ وَعِندَهُمُ التَّوْرَاةُ فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ (But how is it that they come to you for *judgement* while they have *the Torah*, in which is the *judgement* of Allah? (Q 5:43)); and (2) "وليحكم أهل الانجيل بنا أنزل الله فيه (And let the People of *the Gospel judge* by what Allah has revealed therein (Q 5:47))." It is worthy of notice that the base word حكم (judge/judgement) recurs one hundred and eight times in the Qurʾān corpus, with different derivations. It collocates with the word كتاب (Book) eighteen times. Most pertinent to the Qurʾān are four instances: (1) إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ (Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad ], the *Book* in truth so you may *judge* between the people by that which Allah has shown you (Q 4:105)); (2) فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ (So *judge* between them by *what Allah has revealed* (Q 5:48)); (3) "وَأَنِ احْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ (And *judge*, [O Muḥammad ], between them by *what Allah has revealed* and do not follow their inclinations) (Q 5:49)"; and وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا (And thus We have *revealed it* as an Arabic *legislation* (Q 13:37)).

Another clear linguistic feature is the necessity for the People of the Book to يقيموا (uphold the law of) the Torah and the Gospel. In this respect, Allah says, (1) وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِم مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ لَأَكَلُوا مِن فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِم (And if only they *upheld* [the law of] *the Torah, the Gospel*, and what has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have consumed [provision] from above them and from beneath their feet (Q 5:66)); and (2) قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (Say, "O People of the Book, you are [standing] on nothing until you *uphold* [the law of] *the Torah, the Gospel*, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord (Q 5:68)).

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A pivotal recurrent linguistic pattern also combines the two holy Books with الرسول (the

Messenger of Islam), whether in the form of بشارة (glad tidings) given by Jesus or as مكتوب (a

written verse). In this context, Allah says, (1)

> وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُم مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِن بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ (And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of *the Torah* and *bringing good tidings of a messenger* to come after me, whose name is Ahmad (Q 61:6));

and (2)

> الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِندَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (Those who follow *the Messenger*, *the unlettered prophet*, whom they find *written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel*, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So, they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful (Q 7:157)).

The concordance list also reveals مثل (a description) as another relevant pattern that links

الرسول (the Messenger of Islam) and his followers to both holy Books. This is displayed in the

verse:

> "مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ۖ سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِم مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ ۚ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ (*Muḥammad is the Messenger* of Allah ; and *those with him* are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see *them* bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their *description* in *the Torah*. And their *description* in *the Gospel* is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers (Q 48:29)).

One more significant pattern pertinent to the Gospel is the رحمة (mercy) that Allah has

placed in the hearts of the followers of both Jesus and Muḥammad. This quality is displayed

in the abovementioned verse (Q 48:29) رحماء بينهم (merciful among themselves) and in the

following one: ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً

وَرَحْمَةً (Then We sent following their footsteps Our messengers and followed [them] with

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Jesus, the son of Mary, and gave him *the Gospel*. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and *mercy* (Q 57:27)).

With reference to prophet Muḥammad being mentioned in both the Torah and the Gospel, Badawi (2005:7) traces and analyses the relevant quotations, pointing out that the "profile" of Prophet Muḥammad as depicted in the Bible includes six crucial elements, the most important of which are his lineage and the revelation which was to be given to him. As for the Prophet's lineage, Badawi (2005:24) adduces the following verses in the Book of Isaiah (Ch. 11:1-2):

> There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Proving that Jesse is contracted from Ishmael, Badawi concludes that "the only one who came from Ishmael's "stem" who was a prophet, statesman and judge was Prophet Muḥammad." Concerning the characteristics of the awaited Prophet, Badawi (2005:25) refers to what Prophet Moses said in the Book of Deuteronomy: "And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him (18:17-18)." Badawi (2005:28) holds a comparison between the three Prophets and displays their characteristics in a table, which he considers "self-evident," since "it shows that not only were Moses and Muḥammad very much alike in many respects, but it shows also that Prophet Jesus does not fit this particular prophecy." Besides, Badawi (2005:30) takes the part of the above quotation which reads "will put My words in His mouth" to be a confirmation of what is mentioned about Prophet Muḥammad in the Qurʾān, as in وما ينطق عن الهوى إن هو إلا وحي يوحى (Nor does he speak from his own inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed Q (53:3-4)).

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In a nutshell, the three holy Books, in which the People of the Book and Muslims believe, state that God is the One Who revealed them to Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. The common characteristic of all these Books is that they enlighten and provide divine guidance to their followers. They also contain just rules and criteria by which scholars of the three religions can settle disputes and issue fair judgements among their followers. More importantly, the three great Messengers are commanded to judge among people by what Allah has shown in the Scriptures. The People of the Book are particularly advised to uphold the law of the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to them from their Lord.

Another important term that was expected to recur very often in the frequency list of the People of the Book is ابراهيم (Abraham), due to his dignified position in Judaism and Christianity. But he was mentioned once in the company of the People of the Book and their Holy Books, as in (يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَاةُ وَالإنجِيلُ إِلاَّ مِن بَعْدِهِ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ O) *People of the Book*, why do you argue about *Abraham* while *the Torah* and *the Gospel* were not revealed until after him? Then will you not reason? (Q 3:65)). Searching the Qurʾān Corpus for the word ابراهيم (Abraham) gave sixty eight occurrences. In the following section, the researcher has detected the significant linguistic patterns in the concordance list of the word ابراهيم (Abraham) to show how they are related to the People of the Book.

| collocate | occurences | collocate | occurences | collocate | occurences |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| من | 13 | وإسماعيل | 7 | عن | 5 |
| وما | 10 | حنيفا | 6 | إلى | 5 |
| قال | 10 | أن | 6 | هذا | 4 |
| كان | 10 | إن | 6 | ومن | 4 |
| وإذ | 8 | على | 6 | إبراهيم | 4 |
| وإسحاق | 8 | يا | 5 | والأسباط | 4 |
| ملة | 8 | هي | 5 | لأبيه | 4 |
| ويعقوب | 7 | الله | 5 | | |

**Figure (4). Collocates of ابراهيم " ʾIbrāhīm" in arabiCorpus (Qur'an section)**

The first remarkable linguistic pattern is the close relation between ابراهيم (Abraham) and the word كان (was). The concordance list reveals ten instances of the combination: three in the affirmative and seven in the negative. As for the former, Allah says that Abraham كان صديقا نبيا

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(*was* a man of truth and a prophet (Q 19:41)); كان أمة (*was* a leader having all the good

righteous qualities (Khan translation), or 'an epitome of godliness, one of a kind,' according to

Badawi and Abdel-Haleem (2008), (Q 16:120)); and كان حنيفا مسلما (*was* one inclining toward

truth, a Muslim [submitting to Allah] (Q 3:67)). With reference to the negative instances,

Abraham is described as ما كان (was not) in five verses, and لم يك (another form of was not) in

two. One of the five verses shows the pattern ما كان (was not) negating the claim that

Abraham *was* (يهوديا (a Jew) or نصرانيا (a Christian): ما كان إبراهيم يهوديا ولا نصرانيا Abraham was

*neither a Jew nor a Christian* (Q 3:67)). The other four state, in exactly the same words, that

Abraham ما كان من المشركين (was not of the polytheists), as in the verses (Q 2:135; Q 3:95; Q

6:161; Q 16:123). The slightly different pattern لم يك (was not) is also attached to the same

words من المشركين (of the polytheists), as in the verses (Q 3:67; Q 16:120).

The second important linguistic pattern relating to Abraham is the combination ملة ابراهيم

(the religion of Abraham). As a collocate of ابراهيم (Abraham), the word ملة (religion) recurs

eight times in the concordance list. Apparently, it constitutes the three-word cluster ملة ابراهيم

حنيفا (the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth), which recurs five times. Thus, in these

verses Allah says, (1) ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفاً (Then We revealed to you, [O

Muḥammad], to follow *the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth* (Q 16:123)); (2) قُلْ

إِنَّنِي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ دِيناً قِيَماً مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفاً (Say, "Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a

straight path - a correct religion - *the way of Abraham, inclining toward truth* (Q 6:161)); (3)

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِيناً مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لله وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ واتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفاً" (And who is better in religion than

one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and follows *the religion of*

*Abraham, inclining toward truth*? (Q 4:125)); (4) وَقَالُواْ كُونُواْ هُوداً أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُواْ قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

حَنِيفاً (They say, "Be Jews or Christians [so] you will be guided." Say, "Rather, [we follow]

*the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth* (Q 2:135)); and (5) قُلْ صَدَقَ اللهُ فَاتَّبِعُواْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

حَنِيفاً (Say, " Allah has told the truth. So, follow *the religion of Abraham, inclining toward*

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*truth*) (Q 3:95)." Besides, the pattern ملة ابراهيم (the religion of Abraham) is preceded by the

verb اتبع (follow) in different cases. This is shown in four instances: (1) ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ

إِبْرَاهِيمَ (Then We revealed to you, [O Muḥammad ], to follow *the religion of Abraham* (Q

16:123)); (2) وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِيناً مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لله وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ واتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (And who is better in

religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and follows *the*

*religion of Abraham?* (Q 4:125)); (3) قل صدق الله فاتبعوا ملة ابراهيم (Say, " Allah has told the

truth. So, follow *the religion of Abraham* (Q 3:95)); and (4) وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ

(And I *have followed the religion of* my fathers, *Abraham*, Isaac and Jacob (Q 12:38)).

Finally, the pattern ملة ابراهيم (the religion of Abraham) recurs in two other instances, as

follows: (1) وَمَن يَرْغَبُ عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلاَّ مَن سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ (And who would be averse to *the religion of*

*Abraham* except one who makes a fool of himself (Q 2:130)); and (2) وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ

اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (And strive for Allah with the striving due to

Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. [It is] *the*

*religion of your father, Abraham* (Q 22:78)).

The co-occurrence of Abraham and the verb وصى (to enjoin upon, to prescribe, to

command) is the third linguistic pattern relating to Abraham. Such a close relation appears in

two verses: (1) وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلاَ تَمُوتُنَّ إَلاَّ وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (And

*Abraham instructed* his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Jacob, [saying], "O my sons,

indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims (Q

2:132)); and (2) شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحاً وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ

أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ (He has ordained for you of religion what He *enjoined upon* Noah and

that which We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad ], and what We *enjoined upon Abraham*

and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein (Q 42:13)).

The last prominent linguistic pattern in the concordance list on Abraham is the

juxtaposition of Abraham and a divine address to Prophet Muḥammad and the Muslim

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believers. This juxtaposition is displayed in four verses. The first two show the same

message, with a divine address قل (say) to the Prophet in one of them and قولوا (say) to the

believers in the other. Thus, in one of them Allah says,

> "قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ" *Say* (O Muḥammad ): "*We* have believed in Allah and in what was revealed to *us* and what was revealed to *Abraham*, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Descendants, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord. *We* make no distinction between any of them, and *we* are Muslims [submitting] to Him (Q 3:84)).

Similarly, in the other, He says,

> "قُولُواْ آمَنَّا بِاللهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ" *Say* [O believers]: "*We* have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to *us* and what has been revealed to *Abraham* and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. *We* make no distinction between any of them, and *we* are Muslims [in submission] to Him (Q 2:136)).

The same linguistic pattern appears in the third verse in which Allah says, إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ

لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ (Indeed, the most worthy of *Abraham* among the people are those

who followed him [in submission to Allah] and *this prophet*, and *those who believe* [in his

message] (Q 3:68)). The pattern is finally displayed in the following verse:

> قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَآء مِنكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاء أَبَداً حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحْدَهُ (There has already been for *you* an excellent pattern in *Abraham* and those with him, when they said to their people, "Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone (Q 60:4)).

The Qurʾānic discourse thus refutes the allegations that Prophet Abraham followed the

teachings of Judaism and Christianity. Rather, he was a distinguished Father of Prophets, who

enjoyed all the good righteous qualities, including his inclination toward truth and his

submission to Allah alone, ascribing none to Him in worship. The direct conclusion is that

the worthiest of Abraham among people over the ages are those who followed him, Prophet

Muḥammad, and all those who believe in his message. Muslims and their Messenger are

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commanded to follow in the footsteps of Prophet Abraham and carry out his message, the message of worshipping Allah alone. Indeed, the content of such a message is the same for all Prophets, including Noah, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad.

**5- Conclusion**

The paper tried to answer two questions about the Qurʾān's attitude towards the People of the Book and the kind of relations it recommends for Muslims, Christians and Jews.  As for the first question: What is the attitude of the Qurʾānic discourse towards the People of the Book?, it  assures the People of the Book that the core divine message sent to them at the hands of Prophets Moses and Jesus is to be reaffirmed and complemented by making available to them clear evidence represented in Prophet Muḥammad and the Qurʾān, which counts as an optimal means of guidance. They are addressed as the People of the Book, namely as the believers in the Torah and the Gospel, wherein prophecies about the advent of the Prophet of Islam are mentioned. Further, the Qurʾān urges them to be fair and to reconsider their attitudes concerning pivotal theological issues so that they could get insights and develop a course of action that makes them closer to Allah and dearer to their fellow Muslim believers. Concerning the second question: What is the kind of relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book that the Qurʾānic discourse recommends?, it is evident that the Qurʾān commands Muslims to argue with the People of the Book in the best way, using all means of wisdom and logical reasoning, so as to reach the joint goal of worshipping Allah alone and enjoy living in peace. Besides, it is utterly banned for Muslims to use violence or compulsion in conveying their message to the People of the Book.

   In addition, the Qurʾān calls for the People of the Book to observe a common word between them and Muslims, since the core message of the three Abrahamic religions is embodied in worshipping none but God and the love of the neighbour. Hence, Muslims are required to address the People of the Book gently to put this message into effect and to

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initiate interfaith dialogue, hopefully realizing favourable objectives for all human beings. Some of these noble objectives could be maintaining mutual understanding and respect, supporting each other in goodness, contributing effectively to meaningful peace around the world, overcoming intolerance and xenophobia, protecting places of worship, defending and promoting moral values, and building a more fraternal world.

**Suggestion for further research**

The present paper has tackled the Qurʾānic discourse on the People of the Book, namely Christians and Jews collectively. Further research could be conducted on the Qurʾānic attitude towards each group separately, investigating the Qurʾānic recommendations for Muslims pertaining to the optimal way to deal with them especially in time of intentional aggression under any pretext. The objective of such proposed research is to reach the best way to maintain and cherish peaceful coexistence among the followers of the three Abrahamic religions.

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