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Scope and focus of *Islamic Insight*

Islamic Insight Journal of Islamic Studies (*IIJIS*) is an academic journal published twice a year by the Kulliyya of Qurʾān and Sunnah, Darul Huda Islamic University, Kerala, India. It is a multi-disciplinary journal devoted for publishing original scholarship of exceptional quality on all aspects of Islam and the Muslim world. It covers, for example but not limited to, textual and field work studies on various aspects of the Noble *Qurʾān*, *Hadith*, Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic Theology, Islamic Mysticism, Philosophy, Comparative Religion, Islamic Social Sciences, History and Culture of Muslims. The papers will be sent for a double blind peer review and will be published accordingly.

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Book Review

Behind The Story: Ethical Readings of Qur'ānic Narratives.
Edited by: Sameer Rashwani. Leiden: Brill, 2024.

Mohammed Niyas P[1]

The Qur'ān dedicates nearly a third of its content to stories, described in Surah Yusuf (12:3) as "the best of stories." These narratives are pedagogical, aiming to instill timeless moral values rather than merely recount historical events. Their universality is underscored by the omission of specific details such as names and locations, ensuring the focus remain on ethical teachings. For example, the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) emphasises patience, forgiveness, and divine justice, resonating across cultures and eras. Similarly, the repetition of narratives like that of Prophet Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh reinforces key moral lessons, illustrating the Qur'ān's unique literary style. Classical scholars such as al-Rāghib al-Isfahāni (d. 1108) in his Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān have highlighted the reflective nature of these narratives, designed to provoke introspection. Repetition, often misunderstood as redundancy, serves a rhetorical and pedagogical purpose. Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jama'ah (d. 1333) argued that these repetitions emphasise different dimensions of the same story, enhancing their moral impact.

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Rashwani's book adopts an ethical hermeneutic approach, viewing Qur'ānic stories as paradigms of moral guidance rather than mere historical accounts. This methodology aligns with modern scholarship advocating thematic and contextual interpretations. The volume integrates classical tafsir (exegesis) with contemporary ethical theories, creating a nuanced understanding of Qur'ānic narratives. This interdisciplinary approach bridges the gap between traditional Islamic scholarship and modern ethical challenges, offering fresh insights into the Qur'ān's moral teachings. Classical exegeses by scholars like al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273), and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) have long recognised the ethical dimensions of Qur'ānic stories. For instance, al-Ṭabarī emphasised divine wisdom in the story of Yusuf, while al-Qurṭubī focused on the moral lessons in the Prophet Musa-Pharaoh narrative. Rashwani builds on this legacy, reframing these lessons to address contemporary issues.

The book highlights the ethical dimensions of several prominent Qur'ānic stories, analysing their relevance to modern moral dilemmas. The narrative of Prophet Yusuf referred to as "the best of stories," explores themes of resilience, forgiveness, and divine justice. Prophet Yusuf's unwavering patience in the face of adversity and his ability to forgive his brothers exemplify the Qur'ān's emphasis on moral fortitude and reconciliation. Rashwani contextualises these lessons for modern readers, showing how they can guide personal ethics and conflict resolution. Classical scholars like al-Rāzī have also emphasised Yusuf's moral resilience and trust in God. Rashwani's analysis aligns with these interpretations while making the narrative relevant to contemporary ethical challenges.

The Prophet Musa-Pharaoh narrative serves as a profound commentary on the struggle between justice and oppression. Prophet Musa's defiance of Pharaoh symbolises the ethical imperative to resist tyranny and uphold moral accountability. Rashwani draws parallels between this story and contemporary struggles against authoritarianism, highlighting its universal applicability. Al-Qurṭubī's commentary on this narrative underscores its timeless relevance, emphasising the ethical lessons of justice, compassion, and divine intervention. Rashwani expands on these insights, linking them to modern debates on human rights and social justice. The story of Prophet Adam and Iblīs delves into themes of free will, moral responsibility, and repentance. Rashwani connects these themes to modern philosophical debates on human agency, offering a fresh perspective on the narrative's ethical dimensions. Classical scholars like al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143) and modern thinkers like Iranian-American philosopher and theologian Seyyed Hossein Nasr have similarly explored the philosophical implications of this story, emphasising its relevance to contemporary ethical discourse.

The ethical teachings embedded in Qur'ānic narratives are not confined to their historical context. Rashwani demonstrates how these stories address timeless dilemmas, such as justice, compassion, and moral responsibility, making them highly relevant to modern ethical challenges. For instance, the patience and forgiveness exemplified in Prophet Yusuf's story can guide interpersonal relationships, while the Prophet Musa-Pharaoh narrative provides insights into resisting oppression and promoting social justice. The universal applicability of Qur'ānic ethics is further emphasised through the book's interdisciplinary approach. By integrating classical Islamic scholarship with modern ethical theories, Rashwani encourages

readers to engage critically with the ethical dilemmas presented in Qur'ānic stories. This dialogical approach fosters a deeper appreciation of the Qur'ān's pedagogical style, which combines moral reasoning with spiritual guidance.

Rashwani takes an interdisciplinary approach, blending classical Islamic exegesis with modern moral philosophy. This sets it apart from other contemporary works, such as Fazlur Rahman's Major Themes of the Qur'ān and Abdullah Saeed's Interpreting the Qur'ān: Towards a Contemporary Approach. While Rahman emphasises the Qur'ān's broader moral and theological themes, Rashwani focuses on the ethical dimensions of specific narratives, exploring their pedagogical structure and moral paradigms. Similarly, Saeed's contextual approach resonates with Rashwani's efforts, but Rashwani adds nuance by framing individual stories as ethical examples. In contrast, Asma Barlas' Believing Women in Islam reinterprets Qur'ānic ethics from a feminist perspective, differing from Rashwani's broader ethical lens. Rashwani's work complements these modern studies by offering a narrative-based analysis that bridges classical and contemporary thought. However, it could be enriched by comparative engagement with non-Muslim traditions, a feature more prominently explored in the works of Rahman and Saeed.

Rashwani's interdisciplinary methodology is one of the book's most significant contributions. By bridging classical tafsir with contemporary ethical theories, the book offers a fresh perspective on Qur'ānic narratives. This approach not only enhances the understanding of the Qur'ān's moral teachings but also highlights their relevance in addressing modern challenges. However, the book has certain limitations. One notable gap is the lack of engagement with non-Muslim perspectives on

Qur'ānic ethics. Comparative analyses with other religious or philosophical traditions could have enriched the discourse, showcasing the universal nature of Qur'ānic moral teachings. Additionally, the book could benefit from more detailed case studies of specific narratives, further exploring their ethical dimensions. Future research could address these gaps by examining the intersections between Qur'ānic narratives and disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and conflict resolution. Such studies would deepen the understanding of the Qur'ān's ethical teachings and their practical applications in contemporary contexts.

Qur'ānic narratives transcend their historical context, offering profound moral lessons that resonate with humanity's enduring ethical challenges. Sameer Rashwani's Behind the Story is a valuable contribution to the field of Qur'ānic studies, bridging classical and contemporary approaches to understanding the Qur'ān's moral teachings. By adopting an ethical hermeneutic approach, the book highlights the relevance of Qur'ānic stories in addressing modern dilemmas of justice, compassion, and moral responsibility. As scholars continue to explore the ethical dimensions of Qur'ānic narratives, interdisciplinary approaches that integrate classical scholarship with modern ethical theories will be crucial. Such efforts will ensure that the Qur'ān's timeless teachings continue to inspire and guide humanity in the pursuit of justice, compassion, and moral excellence. Rashwani's work serves as a stepping-stone for future research, encouraging critical engagement with the Qur'ān's ethical messages and their application in contemporary contexts.

Note for contributors

Author guidelines

1. Articles submitted to *Islamic Insight* should not have been published elsewhere and should not be under consideration by other publication.

2. Articles must be in English or Arabic and should not exceed 10,000 words. Book reviews should be around 1,000-1,500 words.

3. All submissions must be typed double spaced and should be 12-point Times New Roman font (English) or 14-point Sakkal Majalla (Arabic).

4. All articles must include a 200-250 word abstract. Five to seven keywords may be provided at the end of the abstract.

5. Full name(s) of the author(s), along with their affiliation and email address, should be typed at the beginning of the article.

6. Headings and sub-headings of different sections should be clearly indicated.

7. Submissions must be uploaded to http://islamicinsight.in as Word document.

Style of referencing:

1. Papers should follow the in-text parenthetical citation style of the *Publication Manual of the Chicago style.*
2. References should be alphabetically ordered.

Arabic Transliteration Guideline

Transliteration of Arabic letters

ب =	**B**	ذ=	**dh**	ط=	**ṭ**	ل=	**l**
ت=	**T**	ر=	**r**	ظ=	**ẓ**	م=	**m**
ث=	**TH**	ز=	**z**	ع=	**ʿ**	ن=	**n**
ج=	**J**	س=	**s**	غ=	**gh**	و=	**w**
ح=	**ḥ**	ش=	**sh**	ف=	**f**	ه=	**h**
خ=	**KH**	ص=	**ṣ**	ق=	**q**	ي=	**y**
د=	**D**	ض=	**ḍ**	ك=	**k**	ء=	**ʾ**
Arabic Short Vowel	ا=	**a**	اِ=	**I**	أ=	**U**
Arabic Long Vowel	آ=	**ā**	إي=	**ī**	أو=	**ū**
Arabic Double Vowel			أو =	**aw**	أي =	**ai**

Note on transliteration

a) Transliteration refers to the representation of Arabic writing by using the Roman alphabet. Some Arabic letters have direct equivalent. Therefore, they need not to be transliterated. For instance, 'ب' is represented by 'b'. But some other letters have no direct equivalents in the normal Roman alphabet. Therefore, a number of special characters have been created for the purposes of transliterating such letters, such as 'Ṣ' for the Arabic letter 'ص'.

b) Transliteration has to be done with Unicode system. Unicode is a system provided in Microsoft word to facilitate transliteration system. In this system, each such letter is represented by an alpha numeric character which helps the writer to select and insert the letter from '*symbols*' in '*insert*' to the word file. For more details: *http://islamicinsight.in.*

c) Some examples of transliteration are given below:

                             كَتَبَ   *kataba*   Verb is italicised

كَوَّنَ	*kawwana*	Verb is italicised
أَخَّرَ	*akhkhara*	Verb is italicised
كَاتِبٌ	*kātib*	Agent noun is italicised
مَرْءَةٌ	*marʾah*	Common noun is italicised
القَاهِرَة	Al-Qāhirah	Place is not italicised
المدينة المنورة	Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah	Place is not italicised
إحياء علوم الدين	*Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*	Book's name italicised
محمد بن إدريس الشافعيّ	Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī	Person's name not italicised
من يرد الله به خيرا يفقهه في الدين	*Man yurid Allāhu bihi khairan yufaqqihhu fī al-Dīn*	Phrase is italicised
الْعِلْمُ بِلَا عَمَلٍ كَالشَّجَرِ بِلَا ثَمَرٍ	*Al- ʿilmu bilā ʿamalin ka al-sHajjari bilā thamarin*	Phrase is italicised
بسم الله/لله/والله	*Bismillāh/lillāh/wallāh*	Such combinations with Allah are written as single words
عبد الله/كلام الله/ خشية الله	ʿAbd Allāh/*kalām* Allāh/*khashyat* Allāh	Such combinations with Allah are written separately