

## *Islamic Analysis Of ‘The Last Supper’ From Qur’an, Nt and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) on the Basis Of Five-Pronged Juxtaposing Approach*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper shall endeavor to analyze the biblical tradition of ‘The Last Supper’ congruent with promising “Five-Pronged Juxtaposition.” Qur’anic references, New Testament, Second Temple Judaism, Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS,) and Early Christianity shall be expounded and juxtaposed to delve into heterogeneous questions to envisage the happening.

Did this event occur from Islamic view?

Propinquity between disciples and DSS Community from the latest Biblical acknowledgment.

Do Qur’an and Bible expound that DSS Community attended this gathering?

Any historical evidence that explicates that wrath of God fell on the sinners of the Last Supper?

Is there any archaeology claiming this incident?

Consistent picture from the newly built approach

The aforementioned aspects become pronounced once the subject of the historical Jesus, itself, is a matter of quest in biblical scholarship. However, juxtaposed analysis of these questions will enhance the importance of outside references particularly Qur’anic references. This study will give an inventive outlook to focus on Qur’anic references on the subject of DSS.

*Keywords:* The Last Supper, Dead Sea Scrolls, Al-Maida, Christianity, Isrā’īliyyāt , Passover Meal

### **INTRODUCTION**

The subject of “The Last Supper” is an immensely deliberated and multifaceted study because of variable theories and dogmatic contradictions. The subject enticed little or no diligence from Islamic scholarship till to date due to apathetic attitude. However, this paper would delineate on the Five-Pronged Juxtaposing, in consonance with another research paper<sup>1</sup> that propounded a criterion<sup>2</sup> to clear ambiguities of antiquity. German Lutheran theologian and church historian, Harnack, therefore, remarked, “The primitive history of the church’s missions lies buried in

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<sup>1</sup> Rashid Iqbal, “A New Theory on *Aṣḥāb al-kaḥf* (The Sleepers of the Cave) Based on Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS),” *Al-Bayān – Journal of Qur’ān and Ḥadīth Studies* 15 (2017), DOI 10.1163/22321969-12340044.20-47, <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/22321969-12340044#>.

<sup>2</sup> Sound knowledge of DSS Studies, Second Temple Judaism, early Christian history, the history of the Roman Empire and juxtaposing connections found in the Qur’ān to get a consistent picture.

legend; or rather, it has been replaced by a history (which is strongly marked by tendency) of what is alleged to have happened in the course of a few decades throughout every country on the face of the earth.”<sup>3</sup> Aforesaid paper elucidated travelogue of spurious tradition and chronology of its teaching and preaching by epic Islamo-biblical scholars. Multiple glistening references were reviewed, meriting with the criteria of ‘multiple attestations’ focusing on consanguinity of ‘wicked person’ his ‘lie’ and linking it with Q18:15<sup>4</sup> and stoning fright mentioned in Q18:20 vis-à-vis historical evidence of stoning in Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> It was divulged that probably resurrection of the youth was exploited by the Emperors to expand Christianity in pagan Europe.<sup>6</sup> This juxtaposing approach neatly segregated exaltation from a specific tradition.

Another analogy is “The Last Supper,” wherein it is insuperable to acquaint plentiful about minor details, predominantly, once subject of historical Jesus is a quest inside Christology and outside New Testament studies. Scholars are indebted to cognize with happenings of first century C.E. in Jerusalem and Rome that crafted contemporary theological skyscrapers of Christology. For building, this skyscraper reliance is built on the feeble foundations of marred history, sketched on inconsistent historical archives of Josephus and Philo, etc. Contemporaneously, disassociation from Qur’an is visible in interpreting historical events related to post-Islamic monotheistic prophets<sup>7</sup> whereas thorniest enigmas like ‘date’ issue of ‘the Last Supper’ are resolved with the help of scholarship work of past Muslim historians.

Concurrently, the quest of the Last Supper and its linkage with Jewish Passover meal is a mythical episode, unrequited or partly reciprocated. The scholarship is inconclusive on the date, timing, and unfolding of this festival, resulting in variable conjectures. Certain questions should be catechized to contemplate the happening.

- Did this event occur from Islamic view?
- Propinquity between disciples and DSS Community from the latest Biblical acknowledgment

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<sup>3</sup> Adolf Harnak, *The Mission And Expansion Of Christianity In The First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (Harper & Row, 1972) 2,

<http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Christianity%20in%20First%20Three%20Centuries.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal, “A New,” 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 44

<sup>7</sup> Prominently Moses, Zakaria, Jesus and John

- Do Qur'an and Bible expound that DSS Community attended this gathering?
- Any historical evidence that explicates that wrath of God fell on the sinners of the Last Supper?
- Is there any archaeology claiming this incident?
- Consistent picture from the newly built approach

### **CORRELATION BETWEEN 'AL-MAIDA' AND 'THE LORD'S SUPPER'**

Qur'an acquainted that at some occasion during the ministry of Jesus, disciples asked for a miraculous meal, "[And remember] when the disciples said, 'O Jesus, Son of Mary, can your Lord send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven?'"<sup>8</sup> Qur'an is quiet on time and the date of this event. However, it also apprises us with a spontaneous repulsive admonition by Jesus on this demand, "Fear Allah, if you should be believers."<sup>9</sup> Disciples elucidated that this entreaty was aimed at strengthening their faith in God.<sup>10</sup> Jesus then prayed to God, "said Jesus, the son of Mary, O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from You. And provide for us, and You are the best of providers."<sup>11</sup> God imposed a condition in response to this supplication, Allah said, "Indeed, I will send it down to you, but whoever disbelieves afterward from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds."<sup>12</sup>

Apropos, there is a solitary Da'if (weak) narration on this subject,

Narrated 'Ammar bin Yasir: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: The Ma'idah was sent down from the Heavens with bread and meat. And they were commanded to not be deceitful with it and hide it for tomorrow. So they were deceitful with it, and they hid it, so it was raised up in the morning. Then they were transformed into monkeys and pigs.<sup>13</sup>

The weakness of this narration will also be analyzed with circumstantial evidence.

Quibble exists in Islamic traditions, whether this miraculous meal was sent down or not. Few scholars opine it was sent down, whereas many believe otherwise. This question is ignored by Islamic scholarship neither it concerns much to their theology. It was partly taken the incidental

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<sup>8</sup> Qur'an 5:112

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> They said, "We wish to eat from it and let our hearts be reassured and know that you have been truthful to us and be among its witnesses." Qur'an 5:113

<sup>11</sup> Qur'an 5:114

<sup>12</sup> Qur'an 5:115

<sup>13</sup> Tirmizi, Vol. 5, Book 44, Hadith 3061 (English reference), <https://sunnah.com/urn/640640>

and partly apathetic attitude that failed to feature its significance. The subject gained impetus, especially once DSS has resolved anomalies amongst gospels after getting a lead from Muslim historian and mathematician Al-Baiyruni. This study will reflect the preponderance of Qur'anic references once linked with the DSS.

### **HISTORICITY OF THE TRADITION**

#### ***Jewish Passover Meal***

Passover meal is a festival to commemorate the exodus of Jews from Egypt. Its root and tradition originate from the Old Testament. Kiddush (sanctification) is a blessing recited over wine/grape juice to sanctify the Shabbat and Jewish holidays, including Passover meal. It is served with a certain obligation: namely, the Passover sacrifice, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. These three obligations also have a Jewish history:

- (1) The Passover sacrifice is celebrated since the Holy Temple stood for a Holy reason. Exodus 12:27.<sup>14</sup>
- (2) The unleavened bread as the dough of Jewish ancestry that had not yet leavened when the Holy One revealed Himself to Jew's ancestors and redeemed them. Exodus 12:39.<sup>15</sup>
- (3) These bitter herbs are eaten to remember the bitter lives Jews had in the hands of Egyptians. Exodus 1:14.<sup>16</sup>

#### ***The Last Supper of Christianity***

The Eucharist (Communion)—the Last Supper—is the main ritual for most of Christianity. The disparity exists in traditional narration. Synoptics and Paul's first letter to Corinthians 5:7–8<sup>17</sup> differ to a greater extent with Johannine chronology. The synoptic claim that this incident happened over Passover holiday,<sup>18</sup> whereas the gospel of John says that before Passover lamb scarification, crucifixion had occurred. The third category of scholars, including Pope Benedict XVI, strives to acclimate Johannine chronology with synoptic. They present the theory that basic disagreement is not on the day but on the calendar that was used to calculate the date. This theory

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<sup>14</sup> Blessed be He, passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt. As it is said, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover..."

<sup>15</sup> "And they baked unleavened cakes..."

<sup>16</sup> "And they made their lives bitter..."

<sup>17</sup> "Our Paschal lamb, Christ has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

<sup>18</sup> The roots of the festival are found in Exodus 12, in which God instructs the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb at twilight on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan, before the sun sets (Exodus 12:18).

got impetus from the discovery of the calendar of Essenes among DSS.

Once analyzing contemporary conjectures, a decisive altercation is evident, e.g., there is a viewpoint that a general pattern is found in the early church to ‘Passovrise’ the Last Supper. New Testament scholar Bruce Chilton argues that “the identification of the Last Supper with a Passover Seder originated among Jewish Christians who were attempting to maintain the Jewish character of early Easter celebrations.”<sup>19</sup> It contemplates that the motif of early Jewish-Christians was to limit Christian practice as the Last Supper could only be celebrated in Jerusalem, at Passover time, and by Jews.

Contrarily, Jonathan Klawans profess that it was not a Passover Meal ritual, “An ancient Christian church manual called the Didache also suggests that the Last Supper may have been an ordinary Jewish meal. In Chapters 9 and 10 of the Didache, the Eucharistic prayers are remarkably close to the Jewish Grace after Meals (Birkat ha-Mazon).”<sup>20</sup>

Howbeit, fog prevails over all the events surrounding Passover meal of Jews or the Last Supper of Jesus, “For reasons that are not entirely clear, other ancient Jewish sources, such as Josephus and Philo, focus on what Jews did in the Temple... Again, if we cannot know how Jews celebrated Passover at the time of Jesus, then we have to plead ignorance, and we would, therefore, be unable to answer our question.”<sup>21</sup> This antiquity fog can be lifted by closing on to the Qur’anic hints, thus placing missing blocks of this jigsaw puzzle.

### ***Christian Traditional Overview***

On the first day of the Festival of Passover, Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead with clear instructions on where to prepare the Passover meal. This evening Jesus ate with his apostles his final meal before the conspiracy was hatched to capture him. On that dinner, he informed his disciples that one of them would betray him. His disciples individually questioned him, “I’m not the one, am I, Lord?” Jesus said that it is his destiny to die as written in scripture and, the person who betrayed would meet a horrible fate.<sup>22</sup> Then during the meal, Jesus took the bread and the

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<sup>19</sup> Bruce Chilton; *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus Through Johannine Circles*; (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 93–108.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Klawans, “Was Jesus’ Last Supper a Seder?”, *Biblical Archaeology Society*, December 01, 2017, <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/was-jesus-last-supper-a-seder/#note02r>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 26:24, “Far better for him if he had never been born!”

wine and asked God to bless it. He broke the bread into pieces, giving it to his disciples and said, “This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” He took the cup of wine, sharing it with his disciples and said, “This wine is the token of God’s new covenant to save you--an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you.” He told all of them, “I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.” Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.<sup>23</sup> From Mount of Olives, Jesus was captured and later resurrected.

### VALIDATIONS FROM THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS (DSS)

DSS came a long way in resolving the ‘thorniest enigma’ of synoptic gospels verses Jhonanian chronology. The riddle is anatomized by coupling it with the calendar that was probably used. To the same effect, Cardinal Jeane Danielu says,

It is known that one of the most difficult problems in the exegesis of the New Testament is that of establishing the exact day of the Last Supper...But what would be the explanation for this? The problem would be solved if it could be shown that at that time there were two different dates for the celebration of Easter... Jaubert has shown that the people of Qumran used an old ecclesiastical calendar of 364 days...in this calendar Easter always fell on a Wednesday. The night before, therefore, was a Tuesday. Thus, Christ must have celebrated the Last Supper on the eve of Easter according to the Essenian calendar...The discovery of the Qumran calendar permits the true date to be restored and also provides an explanation for one of the enigmas of the New Testament.<sup>24</sup>

The Vatican finally settled this puzzle once Pope Benedict XVI said, “He [Jesus] celebrated Passover with his disciples probably according to the calendar of Qumran, that is to say, at least one day earlier [than Passover in the official Jewish calendar].”<sup>25</sup>

This plenary idea was conceived on the clairvoyance of Anne Juabert in her book, “la date de la cène” in 1958. She rallied on the fact that two calendars were in use at that time, i.e., so-called legitimate Jews used the official Jewish calendar and Jesus, and his disciples used the calendar of the Book of Jubilee, i.e., Essenes Calendar.<sup>26</sup> It now insinuates that her idea received acceptance from the biblical clergy with trivial altercations. However, noteworthy Islamic shade

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<sup>23</sup> Summarised from Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-25, and Luke 22:7-20.

<sup>24</sup> Cardinale Jean Daniélou, “*The Dead Sea Scrolls And Primitive Christianity*”, 1958, Helicon Press. 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Pope Benedict XVI’s Holy Thursday Homily, 1 Vatican City, April 6, 2007. Pope Benedict XVI’s Holy Thursday Homily entitled ‘*Jesus is the New and True Lamb*’ was delivered on Easter Thursday, April 6, 2007 for the Mass of the Lord’s Supper celebrated in the Basilica of St John Lateran. My quotations are from the Zenit News Agency website, [zenit.org](http://zenit.org), based in Vatican City.

<sup>26</sup> Annie Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper*; trans. I. Rafferty (Staten Island: Alba House, 1965 [1957]).

is inherently attached to this postulate, i.e., the idea of the use of dual calendar was primarily projected by Muslim historian Al-Bairuni. It has an interesting evolutionary past that eventually juxtaposed this idea with the DSS. The idea was nurtured once Dominique Barthelémy<sup>27</sup> joined De Vaux<sup>28</sup> at Ecole Biblique, thus gained entrée to DSS in 1949. Later on, published a paper, “Notes en marge de publications récentes sur les manuscrits de Qumrân” in 1952. Barthelémy found from the writing of a Muslim Historian Al-Bairyuni that Magaryas (The Cave People, i.e., DSS Community) were using a calendar in which the year started on the 4th day of the week, i.e., Wednesday.<sup>29</sup> Jaubert conceived her idea from this paper. Attention is drawn to the fact that Al-Bairyuni is divulging on DSS community practices in the 11th century in his book ‘Kitab al Makalaat.’<sup>30</sup> This guides that the DSS community wasn’t alien and their customs were abundantly known centuries ago. A Muslim DSS scholar Rashid Iqbal analyzed that “Moreover, contrasting similarity between scrolls discovery of 805CE and 1947CE compels to believe that later story is probably crafted. This leads to postulating that the entire theory of DSS is either fabricated or partially correct.”<sup>31</sup> It manifests innovative diverging orientation to the existing idea that strongly professes that discovery of DSS was a catalyst for an acquaintance to this community.

This broadly consented biblical hypothesis supports the notion that Jesus was a teacher of Essene. This idea agrees with Qur’anic cognizance through another research paper, “Therefore, internal evidence from the Qur’an forces scholars to see that the Essenes, John, and Jesus were all together at one point, at one time in one community.”<sup>32</sup> These converging hypotheses from the Bible and Qur’an firmly associate Jesus with Essenes. This correlation embroils questions associated with the presence of any N.T. material amongst DSS. Consequently, this thorny presence is deflected with multiple precedencies in the past. Wherefore, Humphreys specifically

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<sup>27</sup> Dominique Barthelemy was a French Dominican priest and biblical scholar. Member of the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem, he studied the Dead Sea Scrolls.

<sup>28</sup> Father Roland Guérin de Vaux was a French Dominican priest who led the Catholic team that initially worked on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

<sup>29</sup> D. Barthelemy, “Notes en marge de publications récentes sur les manuscrits de Qumrân (première partie). *Revue biblique* 59: 187-97. Repr. in *Etudes d’histoire du texte de l’Ancien Testament*, OBO 21 (Editions universitaires Fribourg Suisse-Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Stéphane Saulnier, “Calendrical Variations in Second Temple Judaism”, (Brills 2012), 24, <https://books.google.com>.

<sup>31</sup> Rashid Iqbal, “Spirituality in Discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) at The Crossroad!,” last modified September 6, 2017, <http://www.rashidiqbal.com/2017/09/06/spirituality-in-discovery-of-dead-sea-scrolls-dss-at-the-crossroad/>

<sup>32</sup> Iqbal, “A New,” 37.

stressed while composing his delineation of the Last Supper. He suggested while fitting Essenes calendar inside this scenario, “Jesus was not an Essene, but we can expect, he had Essene followers just as he had Samaritan, Galilean and Judean followers.”<sup>33</sup> Professor Pike, in a roundtable conference on DSS supports the same idea, “There are no remains of New Testament books found in the Qumran caves.”<sup>34</sup> If Jesus wasn’t an Essene, then why didn’t he use Samaritan, Galilean, or Judean specific rituals? Why only Essenes practice? Whereas every historical, archeological and theological clue suggests that both were interlinked and intertwined. The aspect is further elaborated in conclusions.

### *Archeological Evidence Endorsing Historical Record*

The converging hypothesis yearns to undergird strength from certain archeological evidence both from Qur’an and Bible. This evidence will be probed independently by exploring the sociological fabric of Essenes inside Jerusalem. The famous Roman historian Josephus has mentioned three walls around Jerusalem at the time of First Jewish Revolt (66-70 C.E.). Out of these three walls he writes about Essenes Gate, “On the other side facing west, it began at the same starting point [Hippicus Tower], extended [south] through a place called Bethso to the Gate of the Essenes and turned thereafter facing south [but going east] towards the Pool of Siloam.”<sup>35</sup>

Essenes gate was lost in the historical records once Romans demolished Jerusalem to the foundations in 70CE. However, arguably there exist various conjectures on this gate, especially after Jaubert Hypothesis. Colin J. Humphreys writes, “From the information provided by Josephus, we can deduce that this was in the south-west of Jerusalem, overlooking the Hinnom Valley, although its precise location is still disputed.”<sup>36</sup> The latest discovery led to the belief that the Essenes gate was closest to the location of the Last Supper.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the interconnection between Essenes and Passover meal of Jesus in Jerusalem exists from the archeology of the

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<sup>33</sup> Colin J. Humphreys, *The Mystery of the Last Supper: Reconstructing the Final Days of Jesus*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 158.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Donald W. Parry, et al, “The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Roundtable Discussion Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 1,” *Religious Educator* 8, no. 3 (2007): 127–146, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/volume-8-number-3-2007/dead-sea-scrolls-roundtable-discussion-celebrating-60th-anniversary>

<sup>35</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.145.

<sup>36</sup> Humphreys, *The Mystery*, 158.

<sup>37</sup> 3737 Bargil Pixner, “Jerusalem’s Essenes Gate,” *Biblical Archaeological Review* May/June issue, (1997), <http://www.centuryone.org/essene.html>



incident venue. It is superimposed by another clue that describes the guidance of Jesus to his disciples concerning techniques of traveling, “Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave.”<sup>38</sup>

Perfect harmony is visible once juxtaposed with Josephus’ description of the traveling technique of Essenes, “And whenever they go on a journey, they carry nothing except arms. They find in every city an administrator of the collective funds, who procure clothing and food for them.”<sup>39</sup>

Relevantly the guideline of finding ‘some worthy person’ on reaching any town cogitates that the Essenes had a well-knitted sociological system strongly supported by archeological and theological finds.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Qur’anic Evidence and the Last Supper***

The novel idea to incorporate Qur’anic references into this quest is inspired by the latest consensus and research outputs that strongly suggest a linkage between Jesus, Essenes, DSS community and their interlining with the Last Supper. This study faces an interesting equation for the existing scenario. Pope and biblical archeology believe that Jesus used the Essenes calendar while being quizzical of inter-linkage. Moreover, on the one hand, Essenes are not mentioned in biblical scriptures and antagonistically, Josephus talks at length about Essenes, but the charismatic figure of Jesus does not get more than one discredited paragraph of that milieu from him or any other historical record. Josephus confabulates about the students but ignores the teacher. However, there is some connection between Jesus, Essenes, and the Last Supper and Qur’an has the key to this quest. In the Five-Pronged Juxtaposition approach, it is paramount to analyze any Qur’anic reference that may bridge this theological equation. Any convincing evidence from Qur’an possessing capability to interlink Jesus, Essenes and the Last Supper episode will cement the efficacy of the aforesaid approach.

It is conventionally acknowledged that Essenes always dressed in white clothes.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Mathew (10:9-11).

<sup>39</sup> War II, 125-6.

<sup>40</sup> Same aspect has been mentioned by Cardinal Danielou.

<sup>41</sup> Josephus Flavius, “The Wars of the Jews”, chapter 2.123,  
[https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=vVCCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA86&dq=they+do+also+to+be+clothed+in+white+garments&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjvgNOy9u\\_WAhVaF8AKHX04DYUQ6AEIVTAI#v=onepage](https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=vVCCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA86&dq=they+do+also+to+be+clothed+in+white+garments&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjvgNOy9u_WAhVaF8AKHX04DYUQ6AEIVTAI#v=onepage)

Pondering on biblical contents of the Qur'an reveals a curious fact that Essenes are by characteristics mentioned in Qur'an. Qur'an acquaints that the disciples of Jesus are mentioned as <sup>42</sup>حواری. It is derived from the three-lettered Arabic root word "حور" that means "white, whiten. If used as a noun, it means "change of apparent brightness or color of an object caused by the juxtaposition of other objects - the condition of having an intense whiteness of the visible part of the eyeball and an intense blackness of the iris."<sup>43</sup> Pertinently, the science of Essenes is seventy years old, whereas Qur'an is 1500, and the writing of Josephus is 2000 years old. Qur'an acquaints us with this balance of highly complex theological equation that is unresolved in the contemporary era of information technology. In Islamic traditions, it is believed that because of their white clothes or purity of their heart, God called them 'Hawari' whereas DSS discovery and related research reveals added meanings to this word. Qur'an is not "A Book of Science, but a Book of Signs" and the latest discoveries will keep on edifying new-fangled connotations to these signs true to the Qur'anic claim in Q 6:65, "See how We bring forth explaining verses from different angles, so that they may understand." This is sufficiently convincing evidence from the Qur'anic contents that fits in the "Criteria of Multiple Authenticity" <sup>44</sup>duly interlinking three facets. Moreover, thorough this word, Qur'an is shedding subliminal light in the debate of 'the sons of Light' and 'the sons of Darkness' respecting Essenes and there opposing theology.

### COHERENCE BETWEEN DOGMATIC ISLAMO-BIBLICAL JESUS-ESSENES RELATIONSHIP

The research is at an appropriate stage to ascertain a few similarities and dissimilarities in Jesus-Essenes relationship.

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[&q&f=false](#). This fact is cross-verified from various factors e.g. Eccl. ix. 8 says, "Let thy garments be always white", Luke 2:25 Simeon of Luke 2:25 is considered Essenes. Hippolytus' *Refutatio Omnium Hæresium*", ix. 18-28 says, "They always dress in white garments (Linen garments)".

<sup>42</sup> This word is mentioned five times in Qur'an as disciples of Jesus.

<sup>43</sup> Definition as per arabic web dictionary, <https://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%B1/>

<sup>44</sup> Bart Ehrman, "*Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*," (Oxford University Press, 1999) 85-86. He says that "An ideal situation would be to have sources that

- (a) Are numerous, so that they can be compared to one another (the more the better!); 5 times in Qur'an
- (b) Derive from a time near the event itself, so that they were less likely to have been based on hearsay or legend;
- (c) Were produced independently of one another, so that their authors were not in collusion;
- (d) Do not contradict one another, so that one or more of them is not necessarily in error;
- (e) Are internally consistent, so that they show a basic concern for reliability; and
- (f) Are not biased towards the subject matter, so that they have not skewed their accounts to serve their own purposes.

## ***Similarity-1***

There exists a composite heterogeneous equation wherein Pope says that Jesus used Essenes calendar, Qur'an says Jesus's companions were Essenes, and Dead Sea Scrolls say that Essenes possessed us. This triangular relationship is pronounced internal evidence from Qur'an that talks of Essenes. Inference can be drawn that there is another source other than Josephus, Pliny, and Philo and the DSS itself that apprises about Essenes. It can be concluded that Biblical and Islamic evidence has converged at one page concerning the highly complex triangular relationship.

## ***Similarity-2***

There was a demand of a miracle. John 14:8 says, Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us, whereas Qur'an refers to the demand of miraculous meal that Essenes beseeched.

## ***Similarity-3***

There was an element of betrayal at that gathering. In the case of the Bible, betrayal of Judas Iscariot is unforgettable, whereas juxtaposed analysis of Q 61:14<sup>45</sup> dilates upon Jesus asking for vote and declaration by God that a faction of people disbelieved, however, there is no direct mention in Qur'an.

## ***Similarity-4***

There was an element of warning in Matthew 26:24<sup>46</sup> and Q3:56 at the time of the meal.

## ***Similarity-5***

Above mentioned similarities happened in the Last Supper, and this is a big similarity that bridges the theological gap between Islam and Christianity concerning this tradition.

There are certain dissimilarities as well:

## ***Dissimilarity-1***

Nature of Miracle: No mention of a miraculous meal at the Last Supper in N.T.<sup>47</sup> whereas it's

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<sup>45</sup> O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah: As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?" Said the disciples, "We are Allah's helpers!" then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.

<sup>46</sup> Far better for him if he had never been born!

<sup>47</sup> Though NT does mention many miracles and one related to the feeding of thousands but with respect to the Last Supper episode there is no mention of miraculous meal.

mentioned in the Qur'an that disciples demanded a miraculous meal at the dining table. Pictorial depiction in the Da Vinci code depicts that the table mentioned in Qur'an was laid at the last supper.

### *Dissimilarity-2*

Who betrayed: Bible acquaints that Judas Iscariot betrayed and Peter denied, whereas Qur'an doesn't mention anything on this subject. However, Five-Pronged Juxtaposition has an answer to this dogma duly explained in conclusions.

### *Dissimilarity-3*

Nature of punishment: N.T. is silent on this convoluted aspect though N.T. mentions a strong forewarning of Jesus against betrayal. Qur'an indicates a warning; however, what transpired next is untouched. Nevertheless, circumstantial evidence does support this implementation of warning.

### **QUR'ANIC RATIONALES/CONCLUSIONS**

In monotheistic faiths notion of one God is a converging factor. Muslims show an affinity for the Essenes as they were the true follower of Jesus. Therefore, these rationales will Juxtapose Essenes in biblical traditions on the same principles Essenes were juxtaposed for the Last Supper:-

1. Qur'an acquaints that companions of Jesus asked for this miraculous meal. Q5:111<sup>48</sup> don't affix this number with the figure of twelve. More interestingly, sequel reading of verse Q5:115<sup>49</sup> and Q5:116<sup>50</sup> leave an imprint that this was the last episode between Jesus and his disciples. After admonition verses, the subject is shifted to doomsday dialogue, once Jesus would be asked about his ministry. Therefore, an inference can be drawn that after this demand, the meal was probably sent down. This followed partial or collective betrayal resulting in the subsequent resurrection. The latest consensus of biblical scholars on the Essenes calendar in calculating the Passover date and related theories raises germane questions. Who could be the betraying Jews? Were they companions (ḥāwariyūn from Qur'an) or another faction? In quest of reply, a

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<sup>48</sup> And [remember] when I inspired to the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My messenger Jesus." They said, "We have believed, so bear witness that indeed we are Muslims [in submission to Allah]."

<sup>49</sup> Allah said, "Indeed, I will send it down to you, but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds."

<sup>50</sup> And [beware the Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?'" He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen."

significant deduction can be made from Colin J. Humphrey's postulate. He advocates, "He could hardly have asked to use the upper room of an orthodox Jews of the Jerusalem because celebrating Passover on a day other than official one would have been heresy. Hence, I suggest he arranged with the Essenes to use his upper room celebrating the Passover using the pre-exilic lunar calendar that we knew from Dead Sea scrolls some Essenes also used."<sup>51</sup> This yet again generates a question, if Essenes calendar was used in the heart of Jerusalem then who betrayed Jesus during this meal? Is it one only Judas, a group of Essenes, or a collective betrayal? Attention is drawn to the sermon of St Stephen. He explicitly referred to a collective betrayal, instead of betrayal of Judas or denial of Peter, "Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him (Jesus)."<sup>52</sup> The last part of the verse evidently imitates that it was a mass betrayal, especially by the officials related to Sanhedrin. Similarly, Acts 3:13, 4:10, 7:52 and 1 Cor 11:23 also refer to a general betrayal. This betraying faction could only be from Pharisees and Sadducees. In the Qur'anic verse, "But whoever disbelieves afterward from among you"<sup>53</sup> is referring to the witnessing Jews in a direct tense. This implies that there was an element present besides the disciples of Jesus who betrayed and conspired with Romans at the scene. This argument is superimposed from Q 61:14<sup>54</sup> in which God highlights a schism between companions and the opponents and is backed by the hermeneutic interpretation of verses Q3:52-56 that places the missing blocks of this jigsaw puzzle if read in overall scenario. Correct assimilation of these verses, juxtaposed with DSS, the Last Supper, Essenes calendar and Jewish sectarianism of that time, unfolds complete episode. The creative results can be drawn as follows:-

a. Q 3:52:-

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّكَ مُسْلِمُونَ

Translated as, "But when Jesus felt disbelief from them, he said, "Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?" The disciples said, "We are supporters for Allah. We have believed in

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<sup>51</sup> Humphreys, *The Mystery*, 158.

<sup>52</sup> Acts 7: 52, St Paul and Peter also mentions a betrayal. They didn't mention that it was Judas who betrayed.

<sup>53</sup> Qur'an 5:115

<sup>54</sup> O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah: As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?" Said the disciples, "We are Allah's helpers!" then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed".

Allah and testified that we are Muslims”. In this verse, ‘أَحْسَ’ ‘felt’ hermeneutically means that Jesus consciously or instinctively discerned some disbelief in that gathering. On this perspicacity, Jesus commanded a vote from his supporters. His supporters, i.e., Essenes, for the last time, testified to Jesus. This vote clears one part of the ambiguity that his supporters stood with him till the end, unlike any mention of betrayal from his supporters as per biblical record. Gospels, at one point, also hint that disciples ran away<sup>55</sup> from the scene, whereas Acts 7:52 reflects a collective betrayal. This is reconfirmed from Paul and Peter, who never advocated that Judas betrayed.<sup>56</sup> Betrayal of Judas itself is engulfed in conjectures.

b. Q 3:54:-

وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ

Translated as, “And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planner”. God enunciates that everything was not satisfactory in that gathering. The disbeliever indeed planned successful mischief in the same gathering.

c. Q3:55:-

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ إِنِّي فَاعٍ لِمَ الْكَافِرِينَ إِيَّاكَ وَمَطْهَرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

Translated as, “[Mention] when Allah said, “O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return, and I will judge between you concerning that in which you used to differ”. This refers to the final moment of the Jesus ministry, once a plan of disbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees finally hatched. At that time, God also unfolded His plan to Jesus. This plan is articulated to mankind through Qur’an, and circumstantial evidence strongly suggests the sequel.

d. Q3:56:-

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأَعَذُّهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

Translated as, “And as for those who disbelieved, I will punish them with a severe punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helper.” God, while apprising

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<sup>55</sup> Mark 14:50, “Then all the disciples left him and ran away”

<sup>56</sup> Acts 3:13, 4:10, 7:52 and 1 Cor 11:23.

Jesus of his future abode, also acquainted that on this transgression and disbelief, these transgressors are destined for severe punishment, and none will be their helper. This was probably followed by resurrection and fate of disbelieving factions in coming days.

2. If the dinner was sent down and a breach of trust occurred, did promise of the severe punishment fulfill? This fact is duly mentioned in the Bible and Qur'an, and both facts will be examined independently. There is no mention of the conclusive outcome of the warning of Jesus<sup>57</sup> in N.T. apropos the act of betrayal. How far it was better for Judas if he wouldn't have been born, once he committed suicide out of guilt? Where is the element of warning, once suicide is an occasional communal act? It means that Jesus was referring to a bigger canvas.

This juxtaposition also kindles dialectic from Islamic scholarship ambiance, i.e., if the dinner was sent down and a breach of trust occurred, where is the severe punishment that God promised? At this point, solitary narration can be analyzed. The narration tells us the transgressors were transformed into pigs and monkeys. However, the weakness of narration lessens authenticity, thus creating room to broaden our imagination that probably the punishment was even worse. Primarily, this forewarning should obligate two characteristics. First, it should be inimitable. Second, it should be most severe to all earlier punishments. Though turning into pigs and monkeys is a severe punishment, yet it doesn't fulfill first characteristics, i.e., it was not inimitable in the presence of Qur'anic verse 5:60. Therefore, this narration suffers from the defect besides the defect of a chain of narration.

Here, five-pronged juxtaposition can be utilized to cross-examine the most severe and unique punishment by analyzing archaeological or historical signs of punishment. Historical events suggest that as a result of this betrayal, the wrath of God did fell on transgressors. The reason for the Jewish diaspora and destruction of the Second Temple in 70CE rested somewhere in infamous betrayal at the Last Supper. This punishment lasted until the Holocaust in 1945 for almost 2000 years. The first-century historian Josephus says, "In 70CE the Roman general Titus suppressed the First Jewish Revolt (66-70 CE) by utterly destroying Jerusalem and burning the Temple."<sup>58</sup> He tells us that the destruction reached the farthest corners of the city and was so complete that someone passing by would not know a city ever stood there. Josephus writes that

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<sup>57</sup> Jesus said, "Far better for him if he had never been born! (Matthew 26:24).

<sup>58</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, 7.3-4.

approximately 1.1 million people were killed, and 97,000 were enslaved.<sup>59</sup> It is strongly postulated that the warning of God and Jesus did materialize. Within the next thirty years, this betraying faction was indeed slaughtered *en masse*, mutilated, crucified in thousands, enslaved and Jerusalem was burned down to ashes. Pharisees and Sadducees ceased to exist. This massacre only stopped with the discovery of DSS in the Judean desert in 1947, followed by a theological understanding between Vatican and Jerusalem in 1965.<sup>60</sup> Over 6 million were slaughtered within two years before this massive discovery of DSS. This punishment was most severe and inimitable meriting fully concerning the verse.

3. The possibility of this ritual in Jerusalem is portrayed by Colin J. Humphreys.<sup>61</sup> In that scenario, Humphreys emphatically preserves that Jesus wasn't an Essene. This scenario harmonized the disparity of Passover meal by incorporating Essenes calendar. This consensus has augmented and bolstered our imagination on cross-examination with a five-pronged juxtaposing filter. This linkage resolved the perplexing question of biblical scholarship and concurrently rose another perplexing question, i.e., what sparked collective betrayal instead of a single betrayal? If the version of Pope is believed, it can be deduced that the disciples were actually Essenes. If Jesus used the Essenes calendar to multitude this festival in Jerusalem, then plausibly, the day has to be dissimilar than the established Jewish traditional calendar. Resultantly, commemorating this event in the heart of Jerusalem was a heretic<sup>62</sup> act that enticed so-called legit Jews, and probably that was the cause of betrayal by the mainstream Jewish hierarchy of the Jerusalem.

4. There is coherence between the demand for a miracle and the reply of Jesus<sup>63</sup> at the last supper. It reflects that there were two common things, 'A Meal' and 'Demand of a Miracle.' Bible

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<sup>59</sup> Josephus, The Wars, VI.9.3.

<sup>60</sup> Its abounding manifestation can be seen at the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65. The announcement of this council by Pope John XXIII even surprised his cardinals. It says, "True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ", [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)

<sup>61</sup> Humphreys, The Mystry, 158.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid pp. 158.

<sup>63</sup> Jesus says to his disciple who demands this miracle in Gospel of John, "Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me" now compare it with Q5:112, "[Jesus] said," Fear Allah, if you should be believers".



and Qur'an partway on this account onwards. Bible tells that one disciple asked for a glimpse of God, whereas Qur'an enunciates that disciples or 'Essenes' asked miraculous meal. The miracle supplication of Gospel raises qualms as the term 'father' wasn't known at the time of Jesus' ministry. It was progressively introduced in subsequent teachings. Arguably, in a meal festival, demand should be congruent with a meal.

5. It is currently an acquainted fact that theologically strongest community<sup>64</sup> dwelled in the neighborhood of Jesus. Their calendar clears the enigma of gospels accounts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Alternatives available to Jesus to save his life on imprints of valor of Essenes or Zealots<sup>65</sup> are unheard so far. Instead, interpretation of 'Passover lamb' is endorsed for Jesus, who is deliberately slaying himself to save mankind in contradiction to contemporary archeological and historical evidence whereas his struggle is known to be militant and aggressive<sup>66</sup> as per Matt 10:34.<sup>67</sup> Why is then apparent conflict that a roaring lion is converted into a Paschal lamb? This aspect needs elucidation predominantly once Jesus and Essenes are secured with the chains of Essenes calendar.

6. Essenes community had a well-knitted system, unlike the present portrayal of discarded sociology. When this proposition is juxtaposed with Qur'anic verse "[And remember] when the disciples said,"<sup>68</sup> *it* probably refers to the group of Essenes, who were with Jesus. They were the true followers of Jesus mentioned in Gospels, wherein Jesus is addressing a gathering of thousands. Josephus and Philo tell us that around four thousand Essenes had many settlements around Jerusalem. The presumed location of 'Essenes gate' is proximate to the supposed location of the Last Supper.

### CONSISTENT PICTURE

The story can be unfolded by Juxtaposing NT, Second Temple Judaism, DSS and Qur'an to get a comprehensive, consistent picture incorporating the Five-Pronged Juxtaposition approach.

- a. The importance of this meal is well established in Christianity being the last meal of Jesus before his ascension. In Islamic tradition, this meal is mentioned in Qur'an with no

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<sup>64</sup> Existence unknown till 1947.

<sup>65</sup> Whose calendar has been fittingly used. These Essenes or zealots committed mass suicide at Masada rather than falling prey to the enemies.

<sup>66</sup> John 18:10.

<sup>67</sup> "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword".

<sup>68</sup> Q5:112

further elaboration. However, historical record and hermeneutic meanings of verses reflect that this miraculous meal was probably sent down.

- b. Jesus celebrated Passover with Essenes followers using Essenes calendar. (Conclusion from Qur'an, NT, DSS and Biblical research)
- c. Jesus's companions demanded some kind of miraculous meal. (Conclusion from Qur'an, NT and Biblical research).
- d. Orthodox Pharisees and Sadducees conspired with Romans while betraying their kinsmen at Jerusalem. Paul, Peter, and St Stephens made a referral to this collective betrayal instead of betraying one or two disciples. This idea is superimposed by the Q3:56 (Conclusion derived from N.T. and Qur'an)
- e. Transgressors were warned by God for exemplary punishment after this sign is sent down. (Conclusion derived from Qur'an)
- f. The transgressors Pharisees and Sadducees were punished the way no nation is punished duly testified from both Qur'an and N.T. These factions were indeed slaughtered en masse, mutilated, crucified in thousands, enslaved, and Jerusalem was burned down to ashes. It truly fits the warning of God and Jesus. (Conclusion derived from Qur'an, NT, early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism).
- g. Quest of Historical Jesus is over if Jesus is linked with Essenes from these Qur'anic references.
- h. If Jesus is delinked from Essenes, then this Essenes calendar theory should be dumped.

### CONCLUSION

'The Lord's Supper' or 'The Last Supper' and 'Al-Maida' (The Dining Table) are the same event of mega proportionate consequences. The magnitude is greatly diffused to a momentous last dinner while ignoring the aspect of forewarning and its implementation and application. Jesus had been portrayed as a victim of betrayal, savior of the mankind and magnificently kind father who knew that he is going to be betrayed and he is accepting this betrayal as his destiny and, in return, giving today's Christianity 'Savior of mankind'. This metaphysical phenomenon and miracle have been made to disappear from the pages of history as the personage of Historical Jesus itself is made to disappear. It divulges that sympathetic additions were made in these traditions, which were successfully transferred over generations. These additions thus gained strength in the absence of any solid cross-reference, thus building invisible fog. The probable corrective action rests in giving latitude to the existing references outside biblical studies, particularly with Qur'an.

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