

## Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): The Semitic Prophet

A *Semite*<sup>77</sup> is defined by most dictionaries as a member of a group of people originally of southwestern Asia which includes Arabs and Jews.<sup>78</sup> Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was Semitic. He descended through Ismā'īl, the son of Abraham, through Sem, the son of Noah. The Arabs are the largest group of Semitic people and are found in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Qaṭar, Irāq and Palestine. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, they are the most preserved of Semitic people present today both in race and language. Under the entry of *Semites* and the subtitle of *The Arabs and Abyssinians*, the 1906 edition states, “The Arabs in the desert fastnesses of central and northern Arabia have, on account of their isolated position, preserved unchanged more features of primitive Semitic character, custom, and language than any other Semitic nation; the conditions of life have always been too hard to permit the development of any high state of civilization. But Arabia from time immemorial has poured forth wave upon wave of Semites over the surrounding lands; and finally, under the influence of Mohammed in the seventh century of the current era, Arabia became for a time a great world-power.”<sup>79</sup> Unlike other lands, the Arabian peninsula was not entered or conquered as a whole by external forces due to lack of interest in the area and also due to its very harsh conditions. Thus, its inhabitants retained their linguistic and ethnic purity more so than other nations right until the modern era. The closest of the Semitic Prophets to Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), the last in a line of Prophets from Banī Isrā'īl (Children of Israel) through Ishāq (Isaac), the other son of Abraham. He was sent amongst the Jews whom he referred to as “the

<sup>77</sup> The word *Semite* is fairly recent and first appeared in Europe between the late 18th and mid 19th centuries within the context of the study and characterization of races.

<sup>78</sup> Other groups include the ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arameans, Phoenicians (Canaanites).

<sup>79</sup> The 1906 edition of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, (Funk and Wagnels) 11/184.

lost sheep of the house of Isrāʾīl.”<sup>80</sup> The appellation of Isrāʾīl given to the Prophet Yaʿqūb (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) means “Slave of God” and is equivalent to ‘Abdullāh in Arabic which also means “Slave of God.” The Children of Israel (Banī Isrāʾīl) were the offspring of Yaʿqūb who kept the covenant of Allāh and were the best of the people of the Earth in that era due to their uprightness. In the Qurʾān, Allāh recounts His favours upon them, “**O Children of Isrāʾīl, remember My favor that I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds.**” (2:47). The preference given to the Banī Isrāʾīl of that era was not on grounds of race or lineage but due to their uprightness upon Tawḥīd (monotheism), the scripture and the law of Moses. They were chosen and preferred only for the period of time in which they kept to the covenant.<sup>81</sup> This covenant had been violated and remained so despite

<sup>80</sup> As occurs in the Gospel of Matthew, “But he answered and said, ‘I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’” (15:24) and also his statement to the disciples, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles... but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (10:6). The Jews by that time had become very distant, if not detached altogether from the message of Moses and the written Torah. They had adopted the practices of other nations and religions combined with commandments of minute detail collectively referred to as “*the traditions of the elders*” which imposed a tyrannical and obsessive type of observance upon its followers, leaving them as if bound by shackles. This process of syncretization led to what is known today as **Rabbinic Judaism** whose source lies in Talmūdic literature. Rabbis hold divine status and authority and masses of Jews have taken them as such. Essentially, God is manifest in the Jewish Rabbinate. Refer to Israel Shahak’s eye-opening book, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* (Pluto Press, 2008) for a good elaboration on this subject.

<sup>81</sup> The Jews departed from the pure monotheistic message of Moses (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) and entered into associationism (shirk) through **superstition** and **magic** which they absorbed during their Egyptian and Babylonian captivities and also took from many other nations. Similarly, **mysticism** and **spirituality** based upon **pantheistic** and **emanationist** philosophies also poisoned their teachings, especially during the last millenium when the oral Kabbālah was put into writing (the Zohar) and spread amongst them. Under the heading *Sources of Jewish Magic* in the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, there occurs, “The diversity existing within ancient Jewish magic and the essential contradiction between witchcraft and monotheism are in themselves evidences of foreign influence on the system. The scholars of the first

the sending of prophets for rectification, culminating in the sending of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) whom the Jewish leaders rejected. Prophethood was moved by Allāh to another line of descent from Abraham (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) through Ismā'īl (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated, **“Allāh knows best with whom to place His message.”** (6:124). Speaking about the line of Prophets from Moses, Allāh said, **“And indeed, We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear signs and supported him with the Sanctified Spirit (Jibrīl).”** (2:87). And mentioning the reaction of the Jews to Muḥammad’s appearance as a Messenger, Allāh says, **“And when there came to them a Messenger from Allāh (Muḥammad) confirming what was with them, a party of those who were given the Scripture threw away the Book of Allāh behind their backs as if they did not know! They followed what the devils gave out (falsely of magic) in the lifetime of Solomon. Solomon did not disbelieve but**

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centuries of the present era refer frequently and unanimously to Egypt as the original home of magic arts. In the Bible the real homes of all varieties of witchcraft are given as Egypt (Ex. vii. et passim) and Babylon (Isa. xlvii. 9-15). It is very probable that in this respect both countries influenced Israel, and their political power and high civilization made it inevitable that that influence should be deep, although the lack of historical data renders it impossible to determine its extent or trace its course. The influence of Egypt admits of no doubt as regards post-Biblical Judaism, which was for a long period under the control of the Ptolemies both in its civilization and its government. The Egypto-Hellenistic syncretism influenced first the Hellenistic Jews, especially those of Alexandria, and through them the Jews of Palestine. The Jewish and Judæo-Christian view as to the source of Hebrew magic is confirmed by the Books of Hermes and by the recently discovered Greek and Coptic magic papyri, in which the Jewish element is no small factor... Although Assyro-Babylonian and other elements are not lacking, they are for the most part astrological and divinatory in character. Egypt, therefore, gave ancient Judaism its magic and Babylonia gave it its divination, while Hellenism served as the connecting-link. In view of the authority which the Talmud possessed for posterity the magic in it could not but influence later generations... This ancient magic, blended with Hellenistic and medieval European elements, was incorporated in the ‘practical Cabala.’ At the close of the Middle Ages the Cabala influenced the Jewish and the Christian world alike.” End of quote.

**the devils disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Harūt and Marūt.”** (2:101-102). When the Prophet appeared he was rejected on grounds that he was an Arab, from the lineage of Ismāʿīl. This leads us to the discussion of the claim of racial purity and superiority presented by some amongst the Jews. This theme can be found elaborated in Talmūdic literature. The reader should note that these issues are freely and openly discussed in Israel within academia, print and online media and in works published by prestigious academic institutions. These frank or detailed academic discussions do not reach Western audiences through popular media because they are taboo subjects. In our brief discussion in this chapter we will cite mostly Jewish writers, researchers and academics. The intent here is to corroborate what was stated by the authors of the Jewish Encyclopedia in that the Semite character, in language and race, is most marked amongst the Arabs.

The majority of Jews today are Ashkenazi Jews<sup>82</sup> whose origins are contested between *the Khazārian hypothesis* and *the Rhineland hypothesis*. In the Khazārian hypothesis, modern Jewry is mostly European, the bulk of which is said to have descended from the Khazārian Turks of the Caucasus.<sup>83</sup> In the Rhineland hypothesis, Jews

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<sup>82</sup> The Jewish Encyclopedia (1906) estimated the percentage of Ashkenazis in the world population of Jews at the turn of the 20th century to be 92.8%, just short of 10.5 million of the overall 11 million estimated Jews in the world at the time. Sephardic Jews made up 5.1% and numbered 314,000. The remaining 2.1% was made up of the Jews of Khurasān, the Maiminim of Salonica, the Abyssinian Falashas, the Crimean Karaites, the Saharic Daggatouns, the Beni-Israel of Bombay and a few other categories. Amongst the very small number of Sephardic Jews remaining today are those who are genetically indistinguishable from Palestinian Arabs.

<sup>83</sup> Refer to the *The Thirteenth Tribe* by Arthur Koestler (1976), *The Jews of Khazaria* by Kevin Alan Brook (2009) and also an essay by Brook titled, *The Origins of East European Jews* (2003), *The History of the Jewish Khazars* by D.M. Dunlop (1967). Refer to *The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses* by Eran Elhaik published in *Genome Biology and Evolution*, 14th December 2012. Elhaik

are said to have migrated from the Near East to Southern Europe (Italy) and moved upwards towards the Rhineland, known today as Germany.<sup>84</sup> There are problems with both views as exclusive explanations and neither hypothesis on its own provides the entire picture.<sup>85</sup>

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has been criticized by supporters of the Rhineland hypothesis from the angle that this view undermines the racial, ethnic claim of the Jews to the land historically known as Palestine.

<sup>84</sup> Proponents of this view which include Harry Ostrer demonstrate bias in their treatment of this hypothesis by claiming that the Jewish people are a distinct genetic race. Refer to 'Jews a Race' *Genetic Theory Comes Under Fierce Attack by DNA Expert* in the Jewish Daily Forward Magazine, 7th May 2013. However, within the Rhineland hypothesis, research indicates that the Semitic element of Jewry was diluted through migration and intermarriage, disproving the racial purity claims of Ostrer. The most recent paper in this regard is *A substantial prehistoric European ancestry amongst Ashkenazi maternal lineages* by Marta Costa et al. published in Nature (Nature Communications) 8th October 2013. The paper concludes based on mitochondrial DNA variation studies that "The great majority of Ashkenazi maternal lineages were not brought from the Levant, as commonly supposed, nor recruited in the Caucasus, as sometimes suggested, but assimilated within Europe." The Scientist magazine, commenting on this research notes, "The Ashkenazi Jews make up the majority of Jews today and most recently have ancestry in central or Eastern Europe." *Genetic Roots of the Ashkenazi Jews*, The Scientist, 8th October 2013. And in Live Science, "All told, more than 80 percent of the maternal lineages of Ashkenazi Jews could be traced to Europe, with only a few lineages originating in the Near East." *Surprise: Ashkenazi Jews Are Genetically European* Live Science, 8th October 2013. And in the New York Times, "The finding establishes that the women who founded the Ashkenazi Jewish community of Europe were not from the Near East, as previously supposed, and reinforces the idea that many Jewish communities outside Israel were founded by single men who married and converted local women." *Genes Suggest European Women at Root of Ashkenazi Family Tree* New York Times, 8th October 2013.

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of both views and their problems, refer to the article 'Jews a Race' *Genetic Theory Comes Under Fierce Attack by DNA Expert. Israeli Scientist Challenges Hypothesis of Middle East Origins*, published in the Jewish Daily Forward Magazine, 7th May 2013.

However, what is certain is that the majority of modern Ashkenazī Jews have strong European descent on the maternal side, even if we downplay the significance of Khazārian origins for argument's sake.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the presence of Jews who are black Africans, pale skinned, blue-eyed Europeans, Persians and Asian Indians, and a long line of women converts throughout the history of the Judaic people demonstrates that the concept of *Jewishness* or *Judaism* as a *distinct genetic race* is cannot be sustained, a fact acknowledged by Jews themselves.<sup>87</sup> We find in the book of Ezra in the Hebrew Bible, written around 440BC, “Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands;

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<sup>86</sup> The Jewish Encyclopedia (1906) contains an entry for the *Chazars*, “A people of Turkish origin whose life and history are interwoven with the very beginnings of the history of the Jews of Russia... In 679 the Chazars subjugated the Bulgars and extended their sway farther west between the Don and the Dnieper, as far as the head-waters of the Donetz in the province of Lebedia...It was probably about that time that the chaghan of the Chazars and his grandees, together with a large number of his heathen people, embraced the Jewish religion. According to A. Harkavy (‘Meassef Niddaḥim,’ i.), the conversion took place in 620; according to others, in 740.” End of quote. It should be noted that a Khazarian origin for Russian Jewry is acknowledged by the Jewish Encyclopedia, almost 70 years before Arthur Koestler wrote about the Khazārian origins of European Jewry in the 1970s. As the Encyclopedia was written well before the conflict in the Middle-East after the creation of the state of Israel, no claim of bias can be made against it, unlike modern historical and genetic studies where clear political motives exist to support a particular view. Thus, a Khazārian element to modern Jewry is affirmed by the Jewish Encyclopedia.

<sup>87</sup> Refer to *Jews are not a race, but a nation* in Haaretz, 14th June 2012. Another book which addresses this topic is by Shlomo Sand, Professor of History at Tel Aviv University, titled, “*The Invention of the Jewish People*.” Sand refutes the claim of ethnic and racial purity of the Jews.

indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness’.”<sup>88</sup> Dr. Samuel Lebens of Yeshivat Har Etzion, chair of the Association for the Philosophy of Judaism, writes in Haaretz, “If the Jews are a race, then Zionism is racism. If the Jews are a race, then parents who don’t want their children to intermarry are racists... In fact, given any contemporary Jew, it is statistically inconceivable that there shouldn’t be a single convert anyway up their family tree. Admittedly, members of the tribe of Levi claim an unbroken patrilineal chain all the way back to Abraham; but there are bound to be converts on some of the maternal branches of their family tree. There is no such thing as a racially pure Jew. We are not a race.”<sup>89</sup> Islām rejects the concept of a ‘holy race’ and no special privileges exist because of one’s genes or complexion.

In light of the above, the term *anti-Semitism* has been stretched from its historical context within Europe<sup>90</sup> and politically charged to include criticism of what is described by both religious and secular Jews as the ‘aggressive, inhumane and genocidal policy’ of **European Ashkenazi Zionists** against **Palestinian Semitic Arabs**. This turns the phrase into a very powerful reverse-psychological weapon wielding enormous deterrent power against legitimate criticism, leading us to the main point of this chapter: By every standard used to make the charge of anti-Semitism when stereotypes are invoked against Jews, the mockery and abuse of Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and the stereotyping or incitement against Arab Muslims - which appears to be a major obsession of the Charlie Hebdo magazine and other media instruments similar to it - must be condemned as anti-Semitism even more so. This is because the quality of *Semitism* is attributed on the basis of language and race and in both respects, the Semite character

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<sup>88</sup> Refer to the Book of Ezra (9:1-2)

<sup>89</sup> *Jews are not a race, but a nation*, Haaretz (14th June 2012).

<sup>90</sup> “The term anti-Semitism was coined in 1879 by the German agitator Wilhelm Marr to designate the anti-Jewish campaigns under way in central Europe at that time.” *Encyclopedia Britannica (Online)* under the entry of “Anti-Semitism.”

of the Arabs is unrivalled by today's Jews who are overwhelmingly of European descent, irrespective of whether we assume the Khazārian or Rhineland hypothesis. The Semitic element amongst the Jews has been diluted over the passing of centuries. Finally, anti-Semitism is a phenomenon of **Christian Europe** in which Jews were treated with great suspicion, routinely forced to live in pogroms due to Christian superstition and fear, burned at the stake, massacred and expelled from countries.<sup>91</sup> They were accused of engaging in ritual child-sacrifice and subjected to blood libels. These accusations against the Jews were never made by Muslims despite the fact that Jewish communities have remained present in the Islāmic lands right until the 20th century and Muslims never witnessed or reported any such things from the Jews. While Jews were being slaughtered or routinely evicted across nations in Europe, they lived peacefully in thriving communities in Spain (during Muslim rule), Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq, Persia (which became Iran) and many other places.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Jews were expelled from England (1290), France (14th century), Germany (1350s), Portugal (1496), Provence (1512), and the Papal States (1569)." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<sup>92</sup> This is not to say that Jews may not have had negative encounters and suffered at the hands of Muslim kings and rulers with injustice which the Islāmic Sharī'ah has prohibited in relation to non-Muslim minorities under guarantee of protection. The Prophet Muḥammad said, "*Whoever killed a non-Muslims under covenant (of protection) will not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be found from a distance of forty years journey.*" Related by al-Bukhāri. He also said, "*Verily, whoever oppressed a person under covenant (of protection), cheated him, burdened him over his capacity or took something from him which he did not willingly give, then I will be his disputant on the Day of Judgement.*" Related by Abū Dāwūd. But the broad, consistent pattern is that Jews fared much better amongst Muslims and a large number of honest, religious and secular Jews bear testimony to this. Academic publications authored by Jewish historians on the subject also demonstrate this. Refer to the quotes from Jewish sources on this subject later in the book.