

**Exploring and Analyzing "The Story of the Hunts" and
"The Story of the Jewish King Who Killed the Christians" in
Mowlana's Mathnavi Ma'navi and Their Connection with
General Prophethood**

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Introduction

The present article seeks to explore connections between the themes of two stories from *Mathnavi*, "The Story of the Hunts" and "The Story of the Jewish King Who Killed the Christians", and the principles of general prophethood.

"The Story of the Jewish King" is the third story in *Mathnavi*. This confirms the significance of the story in Mowlana's view. During a period in which the world was burning with the fire of greed and war, the sage poet wrote about anti-Christian Jews, a subject matter which was usually overlooked at that time. Arguably, the last time that Jews committed the killing of Christians was the event known as "Companions of Al-Okhdud" which happened before the birth of the Prophet of Islam and which shapes the second part of the story. Therefore, the events of the story are narrated in such manner: in the first part, the king Jodh is determined to eradicate the Christians, and with the minister's cunning and scheming, he carries out his wish; but in the second part of the story, the killing of the Christians, or the

Companions of Al-Okhdud by the Jewish king Dhu Nuwas is adapted from the Buruj Surah in Quran. In this article, we will focus on the second part.

The story revolves around Dhu Nuwas, a Jewish ruler who presents the Christians in the southern region of Arabia with two choices: embrace idolatry or face the torment of being burned alive. Numerous accounts of this tale can be found in commentary texts, Quranic stories and historical sources. Interestingly, all these sources align on the following key points: the fire pit or moat (al-okhdud) and throwing people into it, a child not burning in the fire and inviting the mother and other Christians to jump into the pit, and the geographical location of the story. By referring to the tyrannical behavior of the Jews towards the Christians in forcing them to prostrate before the idols, Mowlana shows that despite the claim of Judaism, Dhu Nuwas did not believe in monotheism; otherwise, instead of threatening Christians, he would have invited them to monotheism and to abandon the Trinity.

“The Story of the Hunts” originates from the chapter “The Lion and the Cow” in *Kalileh and Demeneh* and remains largely unchanged in *Mathnavi*. This story revolves around a group of disorganized forest animals who, after enduring repeated attacks from the lion, decide to strike a pact with their predator. According to this agreement, one animal would be sacrificed to the lion each day, in exchange for the cessation of the lion’s assaults. However, when it is the rabbit's turn to fulfill the pact, he defies the agreement and refuses to become the lion's prey. Instead, he cleverly tricks the lion and manages to throw it into a well. This unexpected turn of events alters the deadly fate that had

befallen the forest, as all the animals had previously surrendered to the lion's dominance.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

That the two stories under study are placed together at the beginning of *Mathnavi* shows that there are basic similarities between the two from Mowlavi's perspective. This idea made the researcher to look for the historical roots of the story of the Jewish king and explore the challenges between Jews and Christians throughout history, especially at historical turning points before the 7th century AH. The researcher found out that the last report of Jewish involvement in the killing of Christians goes back to years before the birth of the Prophet of Islam. However, the mechanisms of time have never been impediments in Mowlavi's way of thinking and interpretation, since he tends to outline the characteristics of prejudiced people and their wrongdoings as well as the role of the sage which can be manifested in the body of a child.

Among the studies conducted on Mowlana's *Mathnavi Manavi*, there is no study on the similarities between these two stories and their componential and intentional connections with the idea of general prophethood.

Discussion

In "The Story of the Jewish King" a poignant scene unfolds as officers forcefully hurl individuals into a fire pit. Among them is a mother, cradling her innocent child in her arms. Shockingly, the heartless henchmen snatch the child away and callously toss it into the raging

fire. However, to the astonishment of the onlookers, the child not only remains unscathed, but also beckons everyone to join them in the pit.

This captivating narrative draws a striking parallel to “The Story of the Hunts”. In both narratives the fate of a nation rests upon the shoulders of a defenseless child. Similarly, in the latter story, a feeble rabbit emerges as the unlikely hero, leading the charge to rescue the land from the clutches of a formidable lion.

The similarities of the components and goals of these two stories with the life events of the prophets as well as their guidance of people and the obstacles they faced demonstrate that Mowlavi's fundamental intention in crafting these stories is to illustrate the mechanism of the prophets' missions. Additionally, the poet aimed to highlight the role of leadership and demonstrate the qualities of general prophethood. In addition to the philosophy of prophethood and the imperative of dispatching messengers, the idea of general prophethood is about shared traits and circumstances that were prevalent during the time of the prophets. It also encompasses personality traits, individual behaviors, and social conducts that exhibit remarkable similarities and close alignments between different prophets. Several examples of these are outlined below: On the one hand, the reliance on divine revelation, the occurrence of miracles, and the lack of financial and public support at the beginning of the journey all contribute to the fight against polytheism, idolatry, and superstition. Tireless efforts are made to guide people and convey revelation. On the other hand, there is the stubbornness of those in power and the foolish individuals who oppose the message of the messengers. They attempt to destroy them and erase the lofty ideals of their mission. These adversaries mock and humiliate

the prophets and attribute inappropriate qualities to them such as madness, demonic possession, witchcraft, etc. Ultimately, the fulfillment of divine promises, the success of the prophets, and the disgrace of their enemies are the most significant universal characteristics of prophethood.

Conclusion

The two stories “The Jewish King Who Killed the Christians” and “The Story of the Hunts” are full of mystical teachings, the most significant of which is the idea of general prophethood. In the two stories, the reflection of the prophets' personalities as perfect human models is evident in the actions of the child and the rabbit. Mowlavi, the sage poet, emphasizes the role of prophets to highlight the significance of elders and guardians as the pillars of mystical thought. These stories vividly depict the behavior of the prophets, serving as visible manifestations and examples. Additionally, they shed light on the biased thinking and injustice of the rebellious enemies.

One can find six concepts that connect these two stories with the idea of general prophethood: 1) the internal strength and external weakness of the child, the rabbit and the prophets; 2) divine support; 3) welcoming danger; 4) the final defeat of the enemy and the fulfillment of divine promises; 5) the role of predestination (qada and qadar); 6) the role of divine intervention in the chain of cause and effects.

Keywords: Companions of Al-Okhdud, King of Jews, *Mathnavi Manavi*, general prophethood, the hunts

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