BEYOND THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN PARADIGM

Covenant, Religious Identity and Ethics Across Three Traditions



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BEYOND THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN PARADIGM

Christianity, Islam, and Judaism: Covenant, Religious Universality, Mary and Jesus, Human Equality, and the Ethics of Warfare

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Abstract

The expression *Judeo-Christian values* occupies a prominent position in contemporary Western religious and political discourse. It commonly portrays Judaism and Christianity as possessing a closely unified ethical inheritance, while excluding Islam from that moral and civilisational framework. Yet systematic comparison of the foundational texts and subsequent theological traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam reveals a considerably more complex configuration of similarities and differences.

This article investigates whether Christianity and Islam exhibit particularly significant convergence in their understanding of Mary and Jesus, universal religious membership, moral accountability, charitable responsibility, and the ethical limitations of warfare. It also examines the distinctive covenantal structure of Judaism, including the relationship between inherited Jewish peoplehood, religious conversion, divine election, and the status of non-Jews.

Particular attention is devoted to Jewish anti-Christian polemical accounts concerning Mary, the affirmative portrayal of Mary and Jesus in the New Testament and Qur'an, and the Qur'anic condemnation of accusations against Mary's chastity.

The article subsequently examines biblical passages concerning Israel's national pre-eminence, differential economic obligations toward foreigners, the subordination of conquered populations, and commands for comprehensive destruction under the institution of *ḥerem*. These are compared with the teachings of Jesus, Qur'anic injunctions concerning justice and warfare, and prophetic prohibitions against deliberately killing women and children.

The study also considers documented statements by influential Israeli religious figures concerning the relative status of Jews and non-Jews, alongside evidence of anti-Christian harassment and religious-nationalist interpretations of warfare.

It argues that Christianity and Islam demonstrate important shared commitments to universal religious invitation, the honour accorded to Mary, and the messianic identity of Jesus. In the specific comparison between biblical commands of comprehensive destruction and Islamic prophetic prohibitions against killing women and children, significant ethical differences are also evident.

However, these findings must be distinguished from the broader historical and theological diversity of the three traditions. Judaism and Islam exhibit major similarities in religious law and opposition to divine incarnation, while Christianity retains the Hebrew Bible as part of its own canon.

The article concludes that the conventional Judeo-Christian framework does not adequately represent the multidimensional relationships among the Abrahamic religions and that a more rigorous comparison must distinguish theological identity, inherited status, religious law, and universal moral obligation.

Keywords: Judeo-Christian values; Abrahamic religions; Judaism; Christianity; Islam; Mary; Jesus; chosenness; covenant; religious universalism; religious nationalism; *ḥerem*; genocide; noncombatants; human dignity; comparative religious ethics.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem of the Judeo-Christian Classification

The phrase *Judeo-Christian values* is frequently employed to describe the supposed moral foundations of Western civilisation.

Its usage commonly associates Judaism and Christianity with shared ideals such as justice, charity, compassion, the sanctity of life, individual moral responsibility, and human dignity.

Islam is frequently treated as a separate religious and cultural system.

Such a classification is historically understandable, given Christianity's origins within Second Temple Judaism and its inheritance of the Hebrew scriptures.

Nevertheless, historical descent does not establish complete theological or ethical agreement.

Christianity departed from normative Jewish understandings of the Messiah, divine incarnation, religious law, and the relationship between religious identity and ancestry.

Islam, emerging in seventh-century Arabia, affirmed the prophethood of Moses and Jesus, the miraculous conception of Jesus, and Mary's exceptional religious status while rejecting the divinity of Jesus.

These relationships suggest that the conventional Judeo-Christian classification deserves critical reassessment.

The fundamental research question is whether Christianity and Islam possess substantive theological and ethical affinities that are obscured when Judaism and Christianity are treated as a unified moral tradition.

1.2 The Central Hypothesis

This article examines the following hypothesis:

Christianity and Islam exhibit significant convergence in their universal religious missions, shared recognition of Mary's exceptional piety and Jesus' messianic identity, and certain ethical teachings concerning the treatment of humanity. These similarities differ from distinctive features of Jewish covenantal peoplehood, selected legal distinctions between Jews and non-Jews, and particular biblical traditions of collective warfare.

The hypothesis does not require the assumption that all adherents of any religion hold identical beliefs.

Nor does it require treating religious doctrines, historical state practices, and contemporary political movements as interchangeable.

Its purpose is to compare the actual sources and assess their implications.

1.3 Methodological Principles

Four distinctions govern the analysis.

First, **scripture must be distinguished from subsequent interpretation**. A biblical command, a Talmudic debate, and a modern rabbinic statement possess different levels and kinds of authority.

Second, **religious identity must be distinguished from ethical conduct**. A tradition's claims concerning divine election or salvation do not, by themselves, establish the behaviour of all its followers.

Third, **universal religious membership must be distinguished from universal moral obligation**. A religion may permit anyone to convert while maintaining distinctions between believers and outsiders. Equally, a non-missionary tradition may affirm the dignity of all humanity.

Fourth, **moral comparison must assess comparable categories of evidence**. A command to kill noncombatants should be compared with rules concerning noncombatants, rather than with unrelated statements concerning general mercy.

This last principle is particularly important in the analysis of warfare.

Table 1. Comparative framework

Dimension	Central research question	Evidence considered
Religious membership	Is belonging defined principally through ancestry, faith, or both?	Biblical covenant, conversion, Christian initiation, Islamic profession of faith
Mary and Jesus	What theological status is assigned to them?	New Testament, Qur'an, rabbinic and polemical literature
Human equality	Does religious distinction establish inherited moral privilege?	Creation narratives, covenant texts, theological anthropology
Treatment of outsiders	Are legal and ethical duties different toward insiders and outsiders?	Biblical law, halakhah, Christian ethics, fiqh
Warfare	Who may lawfully be targeted during conflict?	Biblical *ḥerem*, New Testament ethics, Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence
Contemporary application	How are religious ideas employed in current political disputes?	Documented religious statements, surveys, human-rights reporting

2. Judeo-Christian Values as a Historical and Political Construction

2.1 Historical Relationship and Doctrinal Disagreement

Judaism and Christianity share extensive scriptural and historical foundations.

Jesus lived within Jewish society. His earliest followers were Jewish, and Christian scripture continuously refers to the religious history of Israel.

Nevertheless, Christianity developed fundamental disagreements with Judaism.

The most consequential concerned the identity of Jesus.

Mainstream Christianity recognises Jesus as the Messiah and incarnate Son of God.

Normative Judaism rejects these claims.

Christianity also developed a universal religious community that did not generally require non-Jewish believers to adopt the complete system of Mosaic ritual observance.

Judaism, by contrast, continued to understand its religious identity through the covenant of Israel and the obligations of Torah.

These differences make it difficult to regard Judaism and Christianity as a single theological system.

2.2 The Modern Development of the Phrase

K. Healan Gaston's *Imagining Judeo-Christian America* (2019) traces the modern political construction of Judeo-Christian identity.

The term became particularly influential during the twentieth century, when it was employed in debates concerning democracy, national identity, secularism, and totalitarianism.

Its political usefulness did not arise from a comprehensive demonstration that Judaism and Christianity were closer to one another than to Islam in every dimension of ethical thought.

Rather, it served particular historical and cultural purposes.

Consequently, the phrase should be recognised as a historically situated classification.

It can describe certain forms of shared religious heritage, but it should not be treated as an exhaustive account of Abrahamic ethics.

3. Religious Identity: Covenant, Ancestry, and Universal Membership

A foundational difference between the three religious traditions concerns the constitution of their communities.

3.1 Judaism and the Covenant of Israel

Biblical Judaism places special importance on the covenant between God and Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:6 identifies Israel as God's chosen and treasured people.

Exodus 19:5–6 describes Israel as a distinctive covenantal community.

The relationship combines religious obligations, collective identity, historical ancestry, and divine promises.

Jewish identity is consequently more than an individual's statement of religious belief.

Within traditional Jewish law, Jewish status is ordinarily acquired through recognised maternal descent or conversion.

A person may therefore remain Jewish by inherited religious status even while rejecting Jewish religious belief.

This differs from Christian and Muslim community membership, which is ordinarily organised around initiation into or profession of a religious faith.

However, Judaism is not exclusively a religion of biological ancestry.

Conversion is recognised, and converts can become full members of the Jewish community.

The meaningful distinction is not between a religion that absolutely excludes outsiders and religions that accept them.

It is between a covenantal peoplehood in which inherited identity remains significant and missionary religious communities whose membership is explicitly open across ethnic boundaries.

3.2 Christianity and the Universal Church

The Christian movement developed a religious invitation extending beyond the people of Israel.

Matthew 28:19–20 presents the mission of making disciples among all nations.

Galatians 3:28 articulates the unity of believers in Christ across distinctions of ethnicity and social status.

Acts 10:34–35 rejects the idea that divine acceptance is confined to one national community.

Christianity therefore developed a religious identity that could encompass humanity without requiring descent from a particular ancestral people.

This did not eliminate all religious exclusivity.

Christian communities continued to distinguish believers from nonbelievers and developed different doctrines concerning salvation.

Nevertheless, ancestry was not the fundamental condition for membership.

3.3 Islam and the Universal Ummah

Islam likewise presents its religious message as addressed to all humanity.

Qur'an 7:158 describes Muhammad's mission as universal.

Qur'an 21:107 presents him as a mercy to the worlds.

Qur'an 49:13 explicitly identifies human diversity as arising within a shared creation:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

O humanity, We created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes so that you may know one another.

The verse continues by identifying righteousness, rather than ancestry, as the ultimate measure of honour before Allah.

This principle makes religious and moral standing independent of inherited ethnic membership.

Islam nevertheless maintains doctrinal distinctions concerning belief, religious conduct, and membership in the Muslim community.

Its universalism therefore concerns the scope of religious invitation and the irrelevance of ancestry as a condition of entering Islam, not the absence of all theological boundaries.

Table 2. Covenant and religious membership

Question	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Foundational religious community	Israel and the Jewish people	Followers of Christ	Muslim ummah
Importance of inherited identity	Substantial	Generally not required	Not required
Conversion available	Yes	Yes	Yes
Universal missionary obligation	Generally absent	Central to many traditions	Central to daʿwah
Main basis of religious membership	Recognised descent or conversion	Religious initiation and commitment	Profession of faith and religious belonging
Is religion inseparable from a particular historical people?	Strong connection	No	No
Principal texts	Exodus 19; Deuteronomy 7	Matthew 28; Galatians 3	Qur'an 7:158; 49:13

3.4 Analytical Significance

The Christian and Islamic systems of religious membership exhibit a substantial structural similarity.

Both are universally accessible without requiring descent from a particular ancestral community.

Judaism's covenantal identity is different.

That difference should be recognised directly rather than obscured by treating the division between believers and nonbelievers as equivalent to inherited covenantal membership.

However, inherited religious distinction is not identical to biological superiority.

Whether a tradition teaches superiority must be established through its actual doctrines and interpretations rather than inferred from its membership structure alone.

4. Mary and Jesus: A Major Christian-Islamic Convergence

The place of Mary and Jesus provides one of the strongest areas of theological similarity between Christianity and Islam.

4.1 Mary in Judaism

Mary was a Jewish woman living within the religious environment of the first century.

She is not discussed in the Hebrew Bible, whose texts predate her lifetime.

Normative Jewish theology does not recognise Mary as the virgin mother of the Messiah or assign her the religious status found in Christianity and Islam.

Jewish theology does not prescribe Marian veneration.

However, the historical record extends beyond the absence of a positive doctrine.

Some Jewish anti-Christian polemical traditions explicitly challenged Mary's chastity and the legitimacy of Jesus' birth.

These polemics developed in the context of longstanding theological conflict concerning Christianity's claims about Jesus.

Their significance must be examined rather than omitted from comparative analysis.

4.2 Mary in Early Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics

One important source is the second-century philosopher Celsus.

In the account preserved by Origen in *Contra Celsum*, Book I, chapter 28, a Jewish interlocutor challenges the Christian virgin-birth narrative and associates Mary's pregnancy with a man identified as Panthera.

The passage preserves evidence of an early hostile counter-narrative to Christian accounts of Jesus' conception.

A related and particularly important discussion occurs in the Babylonian Talmud.

In *Shabbat* 104b and *Sanhedrin* 67a, a figure called Ben Stada or Ben Pandera is associated with a mother named Miriam.

The passages discuss competing explanations of the person's parentage, culminating in a wordplay suggesting that the mother departed from her husband.

Some scholars, notably Peter Schäfer, interpret these passages as deliberate rabbinic counter-narratives to the Christian portrayal of Mary and Jesus.

Other scholars dispute whether Ben Stada can securely be identified with the historical Jesus, pointing to chronological and narrative inconsistencies.

The uncertainty concerning the identification does not remove the importance of the material as evidence of ancient religious polemic.

The medieval *Toledot Yeshu* traditions provide further examples.

In various versions, these texts dispute the miraculous conception and offer hostile alternative accounts of Jesus' origins.

These narratives are not uniform, and their manuscripts differ substantially.

Nevertheless, they establish that derogatory representations of Mary formed part of certain historical Jewish anti-Christian literary traditions.

They should not be confused with a universally binding Jewish doctrine about Mary.

The relevant historical finding is that some Jewish polemical writings attacked the chastity that Christianity and Islam explicitly affirm.

4.3 Mary in Christianity

The New Testament presents Mary as central to the birth of Jesus.

Luke 1:26–38 records the annunciation.

Matthew 1:18–25 describes Jesus' conception through the Holy Spirit.

Christian theology subsequently developed extensive doctrines concerning Mary's religious significance.

Catholic and Orthodox Christianity recognise her as *Theotokos*, Mother of God, a title connected to the Christian doctrine of the incarnation.

Most Christian traditions recognise Mary's virginal conception of Jesus.

Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant communities differ concerning the extent of Marian devotion and particular dogmas, but the miraculous conception is central to mainstream Christian belief.

Mary is consequently presented as an exemplary figure of faith, obedience, and divine favour.

4.4 Mary in Islam

The Islamic presentation of Mary is especially significant because the Qur'an not only affirms her chastity but explicitly condemns slander against her.

Qur'an 3:42 declares:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

And when the angels said: O Mary, Allah has chosen you, purified you, and chosen you above the women of the worlds.

The verbs *iṣṭafāki* (chose you) and *ṭahharaki* (purified you) establish Mary's special religious distinction.

Qur'an 19:16–21 narrates the announcement of Jesus' birth.

Mary expresses astonishment that she could bear a child when no man has touched her.

The narrative attributes the birth to God's creative power.

Qur'an 66:12 praises Mary's chastity and her fidelity to God's words.

Most importantly for the present comparison, Qur'an 4:156 refers to:

وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا

Their uttering against Mary a tremendous slander.

The expression *buhtānan ʿaẓīman* communicates a grave false accusation.

Classical Islamic exegetes understood this as a condemnation of allegations concerning Mary's sexual conduct.

Within the Qur'anic account, accusations against Mary are therefore not simply rejected as factually mistaken; they are condemned as a serious moral and religious offence.

This creates a particularly pronounced contrast between Islamic scripture and the hostile portrayals of Mary found in certain Jewish anti-Christian polemical traditions.

4.5 Jesus in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Judaism does not recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Mainstream Christianity affirms that Jesus is the Messiah, the incarnate Son of God, and the central figure in salvation.

Islam affirms that Jesus, or ʿĪsā ibn Maryam, is the Messiah and a major messenger of Allah.

Qur'an 3:45 identifies him as *al-Masīḥ*, the Messiah.

Qur'an 3:49 associates him with miracles performed through God's permission.

However, Islam rejects his divinity.

Qur'an 4:171 rejects divine sonship and warns against Trinitarian formulations.

The distinction is substantial.

Christianity and Islam agree about Mary's exceptional status, Jesus' miraculous conception, and his designation as Messiah.

They disagree fundamentally about whether Jesus is divine.

On the latter question, Judaism and Islam are closer.

Table 3. Mary and Jesus across the Abrahamic religions

Religious question	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Mary possesses exceptional religious status	Not a normative Jewish doctrine	Yes	Yes
Mary conceived Jesus without a human father	Not affirmed	Affirmed	Affirmed
Mary is a model of chastity and obedience	No distinctive Marian doctrine	Yes	Yes
Historical hostile accusations concerning Mary	Present in certain polemical texts	Rejected	Explicitly condemned
Mary is honoured through religious scripture	Not in the Hebrew Bible	Yes, in the New Testament	Yes, in the Qur'an
Jesus is the Messiah	Rejected	Affirmed	Affirmed
Jesus is a prophet or messenger	Not recognised as an authoritative prophet	Fulfils prophetic functions but is more than a prophet	Affirmed
Jesus is divine	Rejected	Affirmed	Rejected
Jesus performed miracles	No normative affirmation	Affirmed	Affirmed by Allah's permission
Jesus was crucified	Not a central doctrinal question	Affirmed	The dominant traditional interpretation rejects his death by crucifixion
Jesus will return	Not a standard Jewish doctrine	Affirmed	Affirmed in mainstream Islamic eschatology

4.6 Comparative Conclusion

The evidence supports a significant Christian-Islamic theological convergence concerning Mary and Jesus.

Their shared beliefs are not limited to general ethical principles.

They extend to specific religious figures and narratives.

The contrast concerning Mary's chastity is particularly important.

The Islamic defence of Mary in Qur'an 4:156 provides a direct textual counterpart to the historical accusations found in certain Jewish anti-Christian polemics.

The substantial Christian-Islamic disagreement concerning the divinity of Jesus remains, but it does not eliminate these shared affirmations.

5. Are Human Beings Equally Valued Before God?

The relationship between ancestry, religious identity, and human dignity is another central question.

5.1 The Jewish Doctrine of Election

Deuteronomy 7:6 describes Israel as chosen by God.

Exodus 4:22 refers to Israel as God's firstborn son.

Deuteronomy 14:1 describes the Israelites as children of God.

These texts establish a distinctive covenantal identity.

The precise meaning of that distinction is disputed within Jewish theology.

Some interpretations emphasise Israel's special religious responsibilities.

Others place greater weight on divine favour, national privilege, or the distinctive spiritual status of Israel.

A serious comparison cannot assume that these interpretations are all identical.

Nor can the doctrine of election be treated as though it has no possible consequences for relations with outsiders.

It creates a distinction that requires theological and ethical interpretation.

5.2 Jewish Texts Concerning Universal Human Dignity

Genesis 1:27 identifies humanity as created in God's image.

This predates the establishment of Israel as a covenantal people.

Mishnah *Pirkei Avot* 3:14 similarly speaks of the human being as beloved because of the divine image.

It then identifies Israel as especially beloved through its distinctive covenantal status.

The same text therefore preserves both universal human dignity and particular divine election.

Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4:5 also develops the idea of humanity's common descent from one original human being.

These sources prevent the doctrine of Jewish election from being reduced to a universal assertion of biological superiority.

However, they do not eliminate the existence of unequal legal provisions or hierarchical interpretations elsewhere in the tradition.

5.3 Divine Fatherhood in Christianity

Christianity employs the language of divine fatherhood and spiritual adoption.

John 1:12 refers to believers receiving the status of God's children.

Romans 8:14–17 describes adoption through the Spirit.

Galatians 3:26–28 connects religious sonship to faith in Christ rather than ethnic ancestry.

Christianity also affirms that all humanity shares a common created origin.

The distinction between creation and spiritual adoption is important.

Mainstream Christian theology does not always teach that every human being possesses an identical relationship of saving sonship with God.

It does, however, generally affirm that human beings possess dignity that is not dependent on their ancestry.

5.4 Humanity's Status in Islam

Islam differs from Christianity in rejecting the literal or theological attribution of children to Allah.

Qur'an 112:3 declares:

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

He neither begets nor is begotten.

Qur'an 5:18 rejects claims of exclusive divine sonship and identifies those making such claims as human beings among God's creation.

Islam therefore does not generally characterise humanity as God's children.

Instead, it grounds human dignity in creation, divine honour, and moral accountability.

Qur'an 17:70 states:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

We have certainly honoured the children of Adam.

Qur'an 49:13 identifies righteousness as the measure of religious honour rather than inherited lineage.

This provides a powerful basis for rejecting claims that ethnicity alone establishes superior human worth.

Nevertheless, Islamic theology distinguishes between faith and unbelief, and Islamic legal history contains differentiated rules for Muslims and non-Muslims.

Universal human dignity and equal religious status must therefore be distinguished.

Table 4. Human dignity, divine election, and religious distinction

Question	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Common origin of humanity	Affirmed	Affirmed	Affirmed
All humans created by God	Yes	Yes	Yes
All humans possess moral dignity	Affirmed in significant sources	Affirmed	Affirmed
Special religious community	Israel	Church	Ummah
Religious status tied to inherited ancestry	Significant in Jewish identity	Generally no	No
Divine fatherhood language	Applied especially to Israel, with broader theological uses	Central, especially through Christ and spiritual adoption	Rejected as a theological description of Allah
Religious honour may depend on righteousness	Yes	Yes	Explicitly emphasised
Principal sources	Genesis 1; Deuteronomy 7; Pirkei Avot 3:14	John 1; Romans 8; Galatians 3	Qur'an 5:18; 17:70; 49:13; 112:3

6. Biblical Chosenness, National Supremacy, and Political Authority

An important question is whether biblical election is limited to religious responsibility or also includes promises of political and economic superiority.

The texts demonstrate that both elements exist.

6.1 Deuteronomy 15:6

Deuteronomy 15:6 promises that Israel will lend to many nations rather than borrow and will rule over other nations.

The Hebrew expression:

וּמָשַׁלְתָּ בְּגוֹיִם רַבִּים

means approximately:

You shall rule over many nations.

The passage explicitly envisages national political and economic ascendancy.

This is not merely an abstract statement about moral responsibility.

It concerns relations among peoples and states.

Nevertheless, it appears within a covenantal framework of promised blessings and should not be automatically transformed into a timeless command for every Jewish person to dominate non-Jews.

6.2 Deuteronomy 28:13

The verse promises that obedient Israel will become the head rather than the tail.

This language conveys elevation and superiority in national fortunes.

However, Deuteronomy 28 also contains extensive warnings concerning disobedience.

The promised status is conditional.

6.3 Isaiah 60

Isaiah 60 presents a prophetic vision of Zion's restoration and glorification.

The chapter portrays other nations contributing to Zion's wealth and prosperity.

Some passages envisage foreign rulers and peoples serving Zion.

The resulting vision contains a clear hierarchy of national status.

Interpreters have understood such passages differently: as historical restoration, eschatological imagery, political vindication, or symbolic descriptions of divine justice.

Their existence nevertheless demonstrates that biblical election includes politically hierarchical representations.

Table 5. Biblical election and national hierarchy

Passage	Central teaching	Ethical or political implication
Exodus 19:5–6	Israel as treasured covenantal people	Distinctive religious membership
Deuteronomy 7:6–8	Divine choice of Israel	Particular election and favour

Passage	Central teaching	Ethical or political implication
Deuteronomy 15:6	Israel will rule over other nations	National political and economic ascendancy
Deuteronomy 28:13	Israel will be the head rather than the tail	Conditional national elevation
Isaiah 60	Foreign nations contribute to Zion's glory	Vision of international hierarchy
Amos 3:2	Israel's special relationship entails judgment	Election as responsibility
Genesis 1:27	Humanity created in God's image	Universal human dignity

6.4 Political Authority and Contemporary Interpretation

The moral and political implications of these texts depend partly on whether they are treated as descriptions of ancient Israel, conditional prophetic promises, future messianic expectations, or presently applicable political directives.

Different Jewish religious movements interpret them differently.

A doctrine of national election can be developed into a theology of collective responsibility.

It can also be developed into claims of political privilege.

The existence of both interpretive possibilities requires direct examination of the authorities who advocate them.

7. Unequal Legal Obligations Toward Jews and Non-Jews

The comparison between communal insiders and outsiders becomes particularly concrete in religious law.

7.1 Interest on Loans

Deuteronomy 23:20–21 prohibits charging interest to fellow Israelites while permitting interest on loans to foreigners.

This is an explicit differentiation in economic obligations.

The law assigns different treatment according to communal status.

Its existence cannot be denied through general references to biblical compassion.

However, permission to charge interest is not equivalent to unrestricted permission to deceive, steal from, or oppress foreigners.

Those are separate legal questions.

7.2 Slavery and Foreign Populations

Leviticus 25:39–46 distinguishes between the treatment of Israelite debt servants and slaves acquired from other populations.

The provisions permit forms of inherited slavery involving non-Israelites that are not applied in the same manner to Israelite kin.

This is a significant asymmetry in the legal status of persons.

It reflects a historical social system in which collective identity affected rights and obligations.

Such texts require serious ethical evaluation, particularly when examined from the standpoint of universal human equality.

7.3 Maimonides and the Subjugation of Foreign Populations

A particularly consequential source is Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, *Kings and Wars*, chapter 6.

Maimonides discusses the requirement to offer peace before warfare, including obligatory wars.

However, the peace settlement he describes may require acceptance of the Noahide commandments, tribute, and political subordination.

In chapter 6:1, he describes the subjugated population as occupying a lower political position under Israelite authority.

He also prevents non-Israelites in that framework from holding authority over Jews.

Chapter 6:4 preserves the possibility of comprehensive destruction against specified biblical enemy populations that reject the prescribed settlement.

These provisions are historically important because they demonstrate that some authoritative Jewish legal formulations developed explicit systems of political inequality.

The requirement to offer peace is meaningful, but the proposed peace is not a settlement between equal sovereign communities.

It is conditional upon submission.

A careful reading must acknowledge both features.

7.4 Prohibitions Against Theft and Fraud

The same legal tradition also contains prohibitions against stealing from non-Jews.

Maimonides' laws concerning theft and robbery prohibit taking another person's property unlawfully, including property belonging to non-Jews.

Rabbinic literature also contains prohibitions against deceit.

These sources create an important distinction.

Some historical Jewish legal rules treat Jews and non-Jews differently.

That does not establish a universal permission to exploit or defraud every non-Jew.

A scholarly analysis should identify the exact unequal provision rather than replace it with a broader claim unsupported by the relevant legal texts.

Table 6. Differential treatment and legal obligations

Question	Jewish biblical and classical legal sources	Christian traditions	Islamic sources and jurisprudence
Different rules for insiders and outsiders	Yes	Yes, historically and ecclesiastically	Yes, historically
Interest may differ by communal status	Explicitly in Deuteronomy 23	Christian approaches historically varied	Riba is prohibited; classical jurists differed on some cross-border transactions
Slavery historically recognised	Yes, with distinctions between Israelites and outsiders	Historically recognised and later contested	Historically recognised and regulated
Foreign populations may be politically subordinate	Explicit in certain biblical and Maimonidean frameworks	Present in various historical Christian polities	Present in classical systems including dhimma
Theft and fraud against outsiders	Prohibited in major legal sources, despite other distinctions	Generally prohibited	Generally prohibited
Moral treatment of foreigners	Commands of justice and protection coexist with unequal provisions	Universal ethical teachings coexist with historical exclusions	Commands of justice coexist with legal distinctions

7.5 Comparative Interpretation

These legal traditions cannot be evaluated simply by identifying the existence of communal boundaries.

All three developed distinctions between insiders and outsiders.

The more important questions are the content of the distinctions, whether they were compulsory, the rights retained by outsiders, and the extent to which they could be justified under contemporary principles of human equality.

Judaism's inherited covenantal structure makes certain distinctions distinctive.

However, Christianity and Islam have also maintained religiously differentiated legal institutions.

The evidence supports a comparative study of unequal provisions, not an unrestricted claim that any one tradition permits all forms of oppression.

8. The Ethics of Collective Destruction: Biblical Ḥerem and Islamic Warfare

This section constitutes one of the most significant ethical comparisons in the article.

The Hebrew Bible contains commands for the destruction of specified populations, including women, children, infants, and animals.

Foundational Islamic sources, by contrast, explicitly prohibit deliberately killing women and children in warfare.

The comparison must examine the actual wording of the relevant texts.

8.1 The Biblical Institution of Ḥerem

The Hebrew term *ḥerem* refers to a form of dedication or ban that, in certain warfare narratives, entails destruction.

Its meaning and application vary across passages.

In the most severe examples, the language requires killing the members of an enemy population without distinguishing between combatants and infants.

1 Samuel 15:3

The command against Amalek includes men, women, children, nursing infants, and livestock.

The Hebrew contains the expressions:

מֵעֹלֵל וְעַד־יוֹנֵק

From infant to nursing child.

The inclusion of these categories is explicit.

The passage does not describe the deaths of infants as accidental or incidental consequences of battle.

They are included within the stated destruction command.

This creates a profound moral problem.

If the text is read as a direct and morally exemplary divine command, it appears to authorise the deliberate destruction of people who cannot reasonably be classified as combatants.

Deuteronomy 20:16–18

The text commands that no breathing being remain alive among specified Canaanite peoples.

The stated rationale concerns preventing Israel from adopting the religious practices of those populations.

This establishes a connection between religious difference and collective destruction.

The context is the conquest traditions associated with ancient Israel.

Numbers 31:17–18

This passage commands the killing of Midianite male children and women who had engaged in sexual relations while preserving girls who had not.

The passage raises additional ethical questions concerning age, sex, captivity, and the status of defeated people.

Joshua 6:21

The conquest narrative describes the destruction of Jericho's inhabitants, including young and old, and of livestock.

This is a narrative report rather than a separately formulated legal command.

Nevertheless, it contributes to the biblical presentation of comprehensive destruction in warfare.

8.2 Ethical and Scholarly Analysis

Christian Hofreiter's *Making Sense of Old Testament Genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2018) examines the moral and theological challenges associated with these passages.

The study recognises that the texts present apparent divine commands for conduct that may be described as genocidal.

This terminology requires care.

The modern legal definition of genocide includes specific requirements concerning prohibited acts and intent to destroy a protected group.

The presence of genocidal language in an ancient text does not establish that a particular historical event occurred exactly as described.

Nevertheless, the ethical problem arising from the command's wording remains.

The deliberate killing of infants and entire specified populations cannot be removed from the text simply through general appeals to the moral character of the wider tradition.

8.3 Warfare in the Teachings of Jesus

The New Testament presents a markedly different ethical emphasis in several teachings of Jesus.

Matthew 5:44 instructs believers to love their enemies.

Matthew 5:38–42 addresses retaliation and non-resistance.

Luke 6:27–36 similarly emphasises love, mercy, and generosity toward opponents.

These passages have influenced Christian pacifist traditions and interpretations of nonviolence.

However, Christianity retains the Hebrew Bible as part of its canon.

Christian thinkers have therefore faced the challenge of reconciling the teachings of Jesus with the destruction commands contained in the Old Testament.

Christian history also includes just-war doctrines, religious warfare, and episodes of coercion.

Consequently, the ethical teachings of Jesus should be distinguished from the complete history of Christian political and military practice.

8.4 The Qur'anic Restriction on Transgression in Warfare

Qur'an 2:190 states:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Allah does not love transgressors.

The prohibition against *i'tidā'*, transgression, establishes a limitation on the conduct of warfare.

Classical Islamic commentators discussed the precise scope of the verse, including its relationship to later revelations and the categories of people who may be fought.

The Qur'an also addresses the cessation of hostilities and the conditions of peace in passages such as 2:192–193 and 8:61.

However, the most explicit prohibition against killing women and children comes from the authenticated prophetic reports.

8.5 The Hadith Prohibiting the Killing of Women and Children

Sahih Muslim 1744b records:

فَنَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنْ قَتْلِ النِّسَاءِ وَالصِّبْيَانِ

The Messenger of Allah forbade the killing of women and children.

The same prohibition appears in Sahih al-Bukhari 3015.

The reports describe the Prophet's response after a woman was found killed during a military expedition.

The prohibition is particularly significant because it concerns a specific category of conduct during warfare rather than a general statement praising mercy.

Within mainstream classical jurisprudence, women and children who are not directly participating in fighting are protected from deliberate targeting.

The detailed treatment of other noncombatant categories, including certain adult men, was debated by jurists.

8.6 The Military Instructions of Abu Bakr

A report preserved in Mālik's *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, Book of Jihad, records instructions attributed to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq when sending a commander toward Syria.

The instructions prohibit killing women, children, and elderly people.

They also prohibit unnecessary destruction of fruit-bearing trees, inhabited places, livestock, and bees.

These instructions demonstrate an early Islamic concern with the protection of civilian life and productive resources.

They are particularly relevant to comparison with 1 Samuel 15:3, which expressly includes the destruction of livestock.

The historical report also contains statements concerning the conduct of war that require separate contextual interpretation.

The report should therefore not be represented as a modern humanitarian treaty or as eliminating every form of legitimate military violence.

Nevertheless, its explicit protective provisions remain significant.

8.7 Limits and Exceptions in Classical Islamic Law

Islamic jurisprudence did not prohibit every military operation in which noncombatants might die.

Sahih Muslim 1745 records a discussion concerning women and children killed during night raids.

Classical jurists distinguished intentional targeting from incidental deaths and debated the circumstances under which military operations remained permissible.

Some juristic traditions also accepted forms of siege warfare and differentiated among noncombatant categories.

These issues should not be concealed.

However, their existence does not erase the explicit prophetic prohibition against deliberately targeting women and children who are not participating in hostilities.

The distinction between intended destruction and incidental injury is central to the comparison.

Table 7. Direct comparison of warfare texts

Issue	Hebrew Bible	New Testament / Christian ethics	Qur'an and Sunnah
Deliberate killing of enemy combatants	Permitted	Later Christian just-war traditions permit it; Jesus' direct teachings emphasise non-retaliation	Permitted within rules of warfare
Deliberate killing of women	Included in specified *ḥerem* commands	No corresponding command from Jesus	Explicit prophetic prohibition for protected noncombatants
Deliberate killing of infants	Included in 1 Samuel 15:3	No corresponding command from Jesus	Explicit prophetic prohibition
Destruction of entire designated populations	Appears in Deuteronomy 20 and 1 Samuel 15	The texts remain part of Christian scripture but receive different interpretations	No general equivalent commanding the intentional destruction of an entire population including its infants
Destruction of livestock	Included in 1 Samuel 15:3	No direct equivalent in Jesus' ethical teachings	Unnecessary destruction prohibited in the cited instructions of Abu Bakr
Destruction of fruit-bearing trees	Restricted by Deuteronomy 20:19–20	No directly comparable warfare regulation in the Gospels	Prohibited in the cited instructions of Abu Bakr
Civilian deaths during military operations	Biblical traditions vary	Addressed through subsequent just-war and moral theology	Deliberate targeting prohibited in specified categories; incidental harm debated
Principal sources	1 Samuel 15:3; Deuteronomy 20; Numbers 31; Joshua 6	Matthew 5; Luke 6	Qur'an 2:190; Bukhari 3015; Muslim 1744–1745; *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ*

8.8 Maimonides and Warfare Against Specified Populations

Maimonides' *Laws of Kings and Wars*, chapter 6, introduces a significant qualification to the biblical framework.

He requires an offer of peace before warfare.

However, the accepted settlement may require religious conditions, tribute, and political subordination.

For specified biblical enemy populations, rejection of the required terms can result in the continued application of comprehensive destruction.

Thus, the peace requirement modifies the application of the biblical commands but does not necessarily replace them with a principle of equal political status or unrestricted civilian protection.

8.9 Comparative Conclusion

The strongest textual conclusion is specific.

The biblical* ḥerem *passages expressly include infants within commands of destruction, whereas authenticated prophetic reports in Islam expressly prohibit intentionally killing women and children in warfare.

This is a substantial difference in the wording and ethical direction of the cited sources.

It does not prove that all Jewish communities endorse collective destruction or that all Muslim military conduct has complied with Islamic rules.

It also raises a serious interpretive problem for Christianity because Christianity retains these biblical texts within its canon.

The comparison is nevertheless important and should occupy a central place in any research examining the moral teachings of the Abrahamic traditions.

9. Contemporary Religious Nationalism and the Status of Non-Jews

The relationship between ancient religious concepts and contemporary political movements deserves separate investigation.

The existence of modern religious-nationalist interpretations makes the historical discussion more than an abstract theological exercise.

However, contemporary statements must be attributed to identifiable individuals and movements.

9.1 Ovadia Yosef and the Status of Non-Jews

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel and spiritual leader of the Shas movement, made widely reported remarks in October 2010 asserting that non-Jews existed to serve Jews.

His statement arose during discussion of the role of non-Jewish labour.

The remarks were criticised by Jewish organisations, including the American Jewish Committee.

The episode demonstrates that explicitly hierarchical interpretations of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews have been advanced by highly influential religious figures.

The status of the speaker matters.

These were not anonymous online statements but remarks attributed to a former chief rabbi with substantial religious influence.

9.2 Mordechai Eliyahu and the Relative Value of Human Life

In 2008, former Sephardi Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu made a statement at a memorial event asserting that the life of one Jewish religious student was worth more than the lives of 1,000 Arabs.

The statement followed a deadly attack at a Jerusalem religious seminary.

The historical circumstances explain the setting of the remark but do not remove its explicit hierarchy of human worth.

It is a documented example of a prominent religious figure making a numerical comparison between Jewish and Arab lives.

It should not be inaccurately transformed into a formal ruling that Judaism universally values every Jewish life above thousands of Muslim or Christian lives.

Its importance lies in the actual statement and the status of the person making it.

9.3 Yitzhak Yosef and Non-Jewish Residence

In March 2016, then Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef made remarks concerning the residence of non-Jews in Israel and their acceptance of the Noahide commandments.

He also described non-Jews in a subordinate service role.

Following criticism, he clarified that the statements concerned a theoretical future messianic situation rather than a policy to be applied immediately.

The clarification is relevant to the historical record.

Nevertheless, the initial remarks explicitly articulated a hierarchical political relationship between Jews and non-Jews.

This provides an important example of the continuing influence of certain legal and messianic concepts within contemporary religious discourse.

9.4 Rabbi Eliyahu Mali and the Interpretation of Biblical Warfare

During the 2024 Gaza war, Rabbi Eliyahu Mali discussed biblical warfare commands and their possible relationship to the civilian population of Gaza.

In reported remarks, he invoked the biblical command not to leave a soul alive and discussed the perceived future military threat posed by children.

BBC reporting examined the fuller lecture and also recorded Mali's position that contemporary military rules prohibited harming civilians.

The distinction is significant.

The complete account includes both the invocation of biblical destruction language and statements recognising present restrictions against harming civilians.

The case demonstrates how ancient religious texts can be invoked within contemporary political conflicts and why complete contextual analysis is necessary.

9.5 Theological Classification and Hostility Toward Christians

Some Jewish legal authorities have historically classified Christian Trinitarian worship under the category of *avodah zarah*, or forbidden worship.

Other authorities adopted less restrictive interpretations of Christianity.

These disagreements have influenced Jewish-Christian relationships.

However, theological classification must be distinguished from permission to assault Christians.

Evidence of anti-Christian harassment should be examined independently.

The Rossing Center's 2025 report documented 155 incidents affecting Christians in Israel and East Jerusalem, including physical attacks, attacks on church property, harassment, and defacement of Christian signs. The total and category breakdown are reported on pages 5 and 10. These are documented incidents within the organisation’s monitoring scope, not a population-wide prevalence estimate.

Spitting at clergy has been identified as a recurrent form of harassment.

Such incidents establish a genuine contemporary problem concerning religious freedom and anti-Christian hostility.

They do not demonstrate that Judaism generally requires spitting at, assaulting, or otherwise abusing Christians.

9.6 Public Attitudes and Representative Evidence

Individual rabbinic statements establish the existence of particular doctrines and attitudes.

They do not automatically establish their prevalence.

For that question, representative research is necessary.

Pew Research Center's 2016 study of Israeli society found that 48% of Israeli Jewish respondents supported the expulsion or transfer of Arabs from Israel, while 46% opposed it.

Among respondents classified as *Dati*, approximately 71% supported that proposition.

These findings demonstrate that exclusionary attitudes were substantial within particular sections of Israeli Jewish society during the survey period.

However, the results cannot be treated as proof that the same proportion of Jews worldwide, or religious Zionists in 2026, believe that non-Jewish lives are less valuable.

A question concerning the transfer of Arabs is not identical to a question concerning the relative value of human life.

The findings are important, but their scope must be preserved.

Table 8. Contemporary evidence and its implications

Evidence	Date	What it establishes	What it does not establish
Ovadia Yosef's remarks concerning non-Jews serving Jews	2010	A prominent rabbi publicly advanced a hierarchical description of non-Jews	That all Jews accept his position
Mordechai Eliyahu's comparison involving one Jewish student and 1,000 Arabs	2008	An explicit statement of unequal human worth by a former chief rabbi	A universally binding Jewish legal formula
Yitzhak Yosef's remarks on non-Jewish residence	2016	A senior rabbi articulated a subordinate political status for certain non-Jews	That the remarks represented enforceable contemporary Israeli law
Rabbi Eliyahu Mali's wartime lecture	2024	Biblical destruction language was invoked in discussion of Gaza	That the speaker endorsed violating all contemporary civilian-protection rules
Rossing Center report on attacks against Christians	2025	Documented religious harassment and violence	That the attackers represent Jewish society as a whole
Pew survey of Israeli Jewish attitudes toward Arab expulsion	Published 2016	Substantial support for exclusionary policy within surveyed groups	The prevalence of every other supremacist belief

9.7 Religion, Nationalism, and Political Authority

Judaism, Jewish nationalism, political Zionism, religious Zionism, and particular Israeli political movements are not interchangeable categories.

Religious Zionism itself includes divergent schools of interpretation.

Some individuals interpret the biblical covenant as imposing obligations of justice and restraint.

Others have developed more hierarchical conceptions of national authority and territorial entitlement.

The presence of both positions does not make the latter insignificant.

It means that claims concerning religious-nationalist ideology should identify the actual movements, scholars, institutions, and political actors involved.

A historical theology of national election may help explain aspects of modern religious nationalism.

However, establishing that relationship requires direct evidence of how particular actors interpret and employ the texts.

10. Universal Ethics, Charity, Mercy, and the Treatment of Outsiders

The comparison must extend beyond the most controversial passages.

Each tradition contains substantial moral teachings concerning justice, charity, and interpersonal conduct.

10.1 Charity

Judaism develops charitable responsibility through *tzedakah*, understood as a duty connected to justice.

Christianity emphasises generosity and care for vulnerable people, particularly in Matthew 25.

Islam institutionalises obligatory charitable giving through zakat and encourages additional voluntary giving through *sadaqah*.

These traditions share important principles of economic responsibility.

However, Jewish and Islamic law may exhibit greater structural similarity concerning obligatory redistribution.

10.2 Forgiveness

Christianity's teachings concerning enemy-love and forgiveness appear prominently in Matthew 5 and 6.

Islamic scripture praises forgiveness and restraint, including Qur'an 3:134 and 42:40.

Judaism also commands the rejection of vengeance and resentment in Leviticus 19:18.

The similarities are substantial.

A claim that forgiveness belongs to Christianity and Islam but not Judaism would therefore be incorrect.

The more defensible question concerns how each tradition balances forgiveness, justice, punishment, and communal boundaries.

10.3 The Treatment of Outsiders

Jewish scripture includes both protective and differential provisions concerning foreigners.

Christian teaching includes universalistic moral narratives, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Islamic scripture contains injunctions requiring justice and kindness, including Qur'an 5:8 and 60:8.

At the same time, all three traditions developed legal structures distinguishing insiders from outsiders.

The practical ethical question is therefore not merely whether a religion proclaims universal compassion.

It is how that principle interacts with its actual legal and political institutions.

Table 9. Comparative moral teachings

Ethical issue	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Charity to the poor	Religious duty expressed through tzedakah	Central obligation of discipleship	Obligatory zakat and voluntary sadaqah
Forgiveness	Integral to repentance and interpersonal ethics	Strong emphasis on forgiveness and enemy-love	Strong emphasis on forgiveness and restraint
Economic exploitation	Prohibitions coexist with some communal distinctions	Generally condemned in moral teaching	Riba and unjust enrichment prohibited
Treatment of foreigners	Both protective and differentiated legal rules	Universal moral teachings; historical legal exclusions	Justice requirements; historical legal distinctions

Ethical issue	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Protection of human dignity	Divine-image theology	Creation and Christian theological anthropology	Shared creation and divine honour
Religious law	Comprehensive halakhah	Canon law and denominational moral traditions	Comprehensive fiqh
Universal invitation to join the religion	Generally non-missionary	Yes	Yes

11. The Principal Counterargument: Jewish-Islamic Legal and Theological Similarities

The preceding analysis identifies substantial Christian-Islamic convergence.

However, Christianity and Islam are not necessarily closer on every theological or legal subject.

Judaism and Islam share distinctive forms of monotheistic theology.

Both reject the worship of Jesus as God.

Both maintain comprehensive traditions of religious law.

Both prescribe ritual obligations, dietary restrictions, and forms of religious purification.

Their legal traditions also contain sophisticated methods of interpretation.

Jewish *halakhah* and Islamic *fiqh* govern extensive areas of personal and communal life.

Christianity, while maintaining moral theology and forms of canon law, generally differs in the relationship it establishes between religious membership and adherence to Mosaic ritual regulations.

David Freidenreich's *Foreigners and Their Food* demonstrates how the three traditions developed distinctive boundaries around dietary practice and interaction with religious outsiders.

His research also illustrates the complexity of comparing religious communities through categories of inclusion and exclusion.

The strongest conclusion is therefore multidimensional.

Christianity and Islam exhibit notable convergence concerning Mary, Jesus' miraculous conception, messianic identity, and universal religious membership.

Judaism and Islam exhibit notable convergence concerning religious law, ritual practice, and rejection of divine incarnation.

All three possess shared ethical concerns, including justice, charity, and moral accountability.

12. Integrated Comparative Assessment

The final comparative assessment identifies the dimensions in which the traditions demonstrate particular affinities.

Table 10. Comparative synthesis of major theological and ethical dimensions

Dimension	Principal similarity or contrast	Research conclusion
Mary as a divinely favoured, chaste mother	Christianity and Islam	Strong convergence
Jesus as Messiah	Christianity and Islam	Shared affirmation
Divinity of Jesus	Judaism and Islam reject it; Christianity affirms it	Fundamental theological division
Universal availability of religious membership	Christianity and Islam	Strong structural convergence
Inherited covenantal peoplehood	Distinctive characteristic of Judaism	Major difference in communal identity
Divine election and national authority	Prominent in biblical Israel traditions	Requires differentiated interpretation
Unequal legal treatment of outsiders	Present in different forms across traditions	Must be compared by specific provision
Comprehensive religious law	Judaism and Islam	Strong structural convergence
Biblical commands of comprehensive destruction	Present in the Hebrew Bible, also retained in Christian scripture	Significant ethical and interpretive problem
Explicit prohibition against intentionally killing women and children	Prominent in the Islamic Sunnah	Important distinction from specified biblical destruction commands
Teachings concerning enemy-love and forgiveness	Strong emphasis in the New Testament; parallels in Qur'an and Hebrew Bible	Broad ethical convergence
Contemporary religious-nationalist hierarchy	Documented among particular Israeli religious authorities	Significant subject for political-theological analysis
Contemporary hostility toward Christians	Documented incidents involving extremist perpetrators	Established religious-freedom concern; prevalence requires separate evidence

12.1 What the Comparison Establishes

The evidence supports four principal findings.

First, the relationship between Christianity and Islam is much closer in certain foundational religious narratives than is often acknowledged in contemporary discussions of Judeo-Christian values.

Second, Judaism's inherited covenantal identity differs structurally from the universal missionary character of Christianity and Islam.

Third, some biblical and classical Jewish legal texts establish particular privileges, differential obligations, and hierarchical relations involving Israelites and non-Israelites. These distinctions deserve direct ethical examination.

Fourth, the biblical commands of collective destruction in specified warfare narratives contrast sharply with the prophetic Islamic prohibition against deliberately killing women and children.

These findings are sufficiently significant to challenge the assumption that the conventional Judeo-Christian category represents the closest ethical relationship among the three traditions.

12.2 What the Comparison Does Not Establish

The evidence does not support treating every Jew as an advocate of ethnic supremacy.

It does not establish that all religious Zionists share identical views concerning non-Jewish lives.

It does not establish that Judaism lacks teachings of mercy or human dignity.

Nor does it establish that Christian or Islamic legal traditions have always treated religious outsiders equally.

These limitations are not concessions that diminish the documented evidence.

They distinguish conclusions supported by primary texts from generalisations requiring different forms of proof.

13. Conclusion

The classification of Judaism and Christianity as a unified Judeo-Christian moral tradition is historically influential but analytically incomplete.

A systematic investigation of the foundational texts reveals substantial Christian-Islamic convergences.

Christianity and Islam both affirm Mary's exceptional religious standing and the miraculous conception of Jesus.

Both recognise Jesus as the Messiah.

Both developed universal religious missions in which membership is not restricted by inherited ethnic identity.

These shared characteristics are highly significant.

The portrayal of Mary provides an especially revealing comparison.

Christianity and Islam explicitly affirm her chastity and religious distinction.

The Qur'an goes further by condemning the slander directed against her.

Certain historical Jewish anti-Christian polemical traditions, by contrast, challenged the legitimacy of Jesus' birth and represented Mary negatively.

This contrast is an important feature of the history of interreligious polemic and deserves recognition in comparative theology.

The question of covenantal election introduces another substantial distinction.

Biblical Judaism establishes a special relationship between God and Israel.

Some biblical texts associate that relationship with national prominence, political authority, and differential economic obligations toward outsiders.

The writings of Maimonides also preserve legal formulations involving tribute, political subordination, and unequal status in specified historical warfare contexts.

These sources demonstrate that covenantal particularity can possess concrete legal and political implications.

At the same time, Jewish scripture and rabbinic literature also contain doctrines affirming the common ancestry and dignity of humanity.

The resulting tension cannot be resolved through a simple declaration that the tradition is either wholly universal or wholly supremacist.

The ethics of warfare reveal an additional and particularly consequential difference.

Certain biblical *ḥerem* passages expressly command the destruction of specified enemy populations, including women, children, infants, and livestock.

By contrast, authentic prophetic reports in Islam prohibit intentionally killing women and children in warfare, while early Islamic military instructions include protections for agriculture, livestock, and civilian populations.

The comparison is not merely one of general moral sentiment.

It concerns directly comparable rules about the permissible targets and conduct of military action.

The contrast is therefore significant.

Nevertheless, the historical interpretation and application of these texts remain complex.

Christianity retains the Hebrew Bible as scripture and has developed multiple responses to its warfare narratives.

Islamic jurisprudence likewise contains detailed debates concerning the conduct of war and incidental civilian casualties.

The investigation of contemporary religious nationalism further demonstrates that hierarchical interpretations of Jewish identity and political authority have been advanced by influential religious figures.

Documented statements asserting the subordinate status of non-Jews or comparing the relative value of Jewish and Arab lives merit serious criticism.

Reports of anti-Christian harassment also demonstrate the continuing relevance of religious hostility.

These examples should be investigated according to their documented content, the authority of the speakers, and the institutions or movements involved.

Their significance does not depend on attributing them to every Jewish person.

The wider conclusion is that the category *Judeo-Christian values* fails to capture the full complexity of Abrahamic theological and ethical relationships.

Christianity and Islam possess important shared commitments concerning Mary, Jesus' messianic identity, and universal religious membership. The foundational Islamic prohibitions against deliberately killing women and children also provide a substantial point of ethical contrast with specified biblical commands of comprehensive destruction.

At the same time, Judaism and Islam retain major similarities in religious law and monotheistic theology.

The evidence therefore supports a critique of the conventional Judeo-Christian framework, but not a simple ranking of entire religious communities according to moral worth.

The most rigorous approach is to compare specific doctrines, laws, and historical interpretations directly.

Such an approach allows significant theological and ethical differences to be identified without obscuring the actual content of the primary sources.

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Edition and research limitations

This revised manuscript incorporates primary scriptural texts, representative classical legal materials, academic secondary literature, and documented contemporary statements. Its comparative conclusions are presented with explicit distinctions between scriptural content, interpretation, and contemporary application.

This is an independently published comparative research essay, not a peer-reviewed journal article or a critical edition of the source texts. The argument addresses the selected passages and witnesses identified here. It does not claim an exhaustive survey of the three traditions. A future critical edition would require manuscript collation of disputed rabbinic passages and fuller engagement with classical commentators.

This first digital research edition retains the author’s argument, adds publication information and clarifies source limitations. Readers should distinguish textual comparison, later interpretation, reported statements and the behaviour of religious communities. No affiliation with or endorsement by any cited person or institution is implied.

Author: Ahmad Ramay

Source locators and reading notes

Scriptural citations use canonical chapter and verse numbering rather than edition-dependent page numbers. Rabbinic citations use tractate, folio, chapter and paragraph locators. These references are retrieval aids; the existence of an online text does not resolve contested interpretation or textual transmission.

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Kings and Wars 6:1–4: https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh_Torah,_Kings_and_Wars.6.1 · Pirkei Avot 3:14: https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.3.14 · Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5: https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Sanhedrin.4.5

The polemical passages discussed in section 4.2 are Shabbat 104b and Sanhedrin 67a. Identification of their figures and their relationship to Jesus and Mary is contested. They must not be treated as a single uncontested historical account, a ruling about Christians, or a representative statement of every Jewish community.

Origen, Contra Celsum I.28 and I.32 may be retrieved at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm · Nostra Aetate, section 4: https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

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The Rossing Center, Attacks on Christians in Israel and East Jerusalem Annual Report 2025, pp. 5 and 10, reports the total of 155 documented incidents. The report was launched on 30 March 2026. Monitoring methods and coverage are described in its methodology section. https://rossingcenter.org/attacks-on-christians-in-israel-and-east-jerusalem-annual-report-2025/

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News reports in references 20–24 are evidence of attributed public statements. They are not primary editions of religious law. The reported clarification in reference 23 must be read with the initial remarks in reference 22. The BBC account in reference 24 includes the speaker's stated acceptance of contemporary restrictions on harming civilians.

DARALHAMD / RESEARCH & REFLECTION

Beyond the Judeo-Christian Paradigm

The phrase “Judeo-Christian values” can describe a shared heritage, but does it capture every important relationship among Judaism, Christianity and Islam? Ahmad Ramay’s comparative research essay examines covenant, religious membership, Mary and Jesus, human dignity, treatment of outsiders and warfare. It argues that the relationships change with the question being asked, and that a single civilisational label can obscure significant connections and disagreements.

The author argues for a comparison organised by specific dimensions rather than a single all-purpose label. Shared ethical commitments coexist with major theological and legal disagreements. The responsible task is to identify the passage, its context, the interpretation being advanced and the limits of the evidence, while respecting the dignity of the people whose traditions are being examined.

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