

## PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING RELIGIOUS NURTURE OF CHILDREN IN THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

SEMAVÎ DİNLERİN ANNE-BABAYA ÇOCUKLARIN DİNÎ TERBİYESİ İLE İLGİLİ YÜKLEDİĞİ SORUMLULUKLAR

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### Abstract

Parents' responsibility is an important concept that we can find in both human-made laws and divine laws. By taking into account the Abrahamic religions' (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam) Holy Writings, parents take up these responsibilities, such as protecting them and catering to their basic needs, nurturing a child's religious life by using different methods and becoming good examples. Thereby, in order to preserve the integrity of the child, while continuing to serve as a guide, the spiritual aspects must be preserved and developed in the same way. However, the three Abrahamic religions have their own perspective on family, and mother-father roles in a child's religious nurture at home. In this paper which is a comparative study, it has been tried to explain the parents' responsibilities regarding shaping their children innate religious instincts based on the Holy Writings of Abrahamic religions. The paper which is conducted with the literature review methods, is formed of introduction and two parts. The first part describes the parents' responsibility related to meeting their children physical needs, while the second part focuses on parents' responsibilities in the spiritual life of children. In the end and, it is discussed the common grounds and discrepancies between the Abrahamic religions' views on parent's responsibilities. Despite the discrepancies and competition between the Abrahamic religions, the most important point of this common ground is that parents have been taken in charge by God as a reflection and placement of divine reality in their children's lives. This task consists of nurturing the belief of their children, and gaining knowledge and skills that will help them to live according to God's warnings and instructions in all phases of their lives, whatever education style parents choose.

**Keywords:** *Religious nurture, the Abrahamic religions, Parents' responsibility*

### Özet

Ebeveyn sorumluluğu hem insan eli ile yapılan hem de ilahi yasalarda karşılaşıcağımız önemli bir kavramdır. İbrahimi dinlerin (yani Yahudilik, Hristiyanlık ve İslam'ın) kutsal metinleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, ebeveynler çocuklarını korumak ve temel ihtiyaçlarına cevap vermek, onların dini hayatını farklı yöntemler kullanarak beslemek ve iyi örnek olmak gibi sorumlulukları üstlenmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla çocuğun bütünlüğünü korumak için rehberlik yapmaya devam ederken, manevi yönleri de aynı şekilde korunmalı ve geliştirilmelidir. Bununla birlikte, bu üç İbrahimi din aile ve çocuğun ailedeki dini terbiyesinde ebeveyn rolleri ile ilgili kendi bakış açısına sahiptir.

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Karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma olan bu makalede, çocukların doğuştan getirdiği dini duygularının şekillenmesinde ebeveynlere yüklenen sorumluluklar kutsal kitaplar temel alınarak açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Dokümantasyon ve literatür taraması teknikleriyle yürütülen makale giriş ve üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde ebeveynlerin çocukların fiziksel ihtiyaçları ile ilgili sorumluluklar belirlenirken, ikinci bölümde ebeveynlerin çocuklarının manevi hayatındaki görevlerine odaklanılmıştır. Sonuçta ise İbrahimi dinlerin ortaya koyduğu ebeveyn sorumlulukları ile ilgili ortak noktalar ve farklılıklar tartışılmıştır. Semavi dinler arasındaki farklılıklar ve çekişmelere rağmen, hepsinin üzerinde durduğu en önemli husus, ebeveynler Tanrı tarafından, çocuklarının hayatlarında ilahi gerçekliğin bir yansıması ve yerleştirilmesi olarak görevlendirilmiştir. Bu görevi, ebeveynlik yöntemi ne olursa olsun çocuklarının inançlarını beslemek ve yaşamlarının her aşamasında Tanrı'nın uyarılarına ve talimatlarına göre yaşamalarına yardımcı olacak bilgi ve beceriler sağlamak oluşturmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Dinî terbiye, İbrahimi dinler, Ebeveyn sorumlulukları.*

## Introduction

The value given to children is often seen in the expressions of the holy books of the Abrahamic religions. In the Qur'an, there are many verses directly and indirectly speak of children. But a child who has not gone through puberty does not become subject to the Qur'an in terms of responsibility. Therefore, the doctrine and guidance in the Qur'an are primarily parent-centred, and the subject that is most emphasized in the verses is (religious) nurture. It has been stated that the most important institution shaping the child is the family.

In the Bible, many texts mentioning children are related to matters such as the child's circumcision, upbringing and nurture. In the past, Christian and Jewish theologians have perceived parenting, as a difficult and sacred duty. According to them, "parents are to help children grow in faith, empowering them to use their gifts and talents to love and serve God and to contribute to the common good. It is believed that nurturing faith in children is an urgent task, and the faith results largely from the diligent work of parents" (Bunge, 2008: 352).

The study was conducted with the literature review methods. Data from the Torah and Talmud, the New Testament, The Quran and hadiths, and printed academic sources such as books and articles about religious nurture in the Abrahamic religions were collected. Despite the fact that there are many translations of the Scriptures, "the New International Version" for the Bible and "Sefaria" for the Talmud were chosen due to the widely used English version based on popularity, accessibility, readability and accuracy. The original version of Quran and hadiths were preferred. The data obtained for the study were organized, and the similarities and differences were grouped together, compared and interpreted.

The aim of this paper is to provide an insight into responsibilities of parents on religious nurture of their children in the holy writings of the Abrahamic religions that can be summed up in these two headings:

- Meeting Children's Physical Needs
- Meeting Children's Spiritual Needs
- Meeting Children's Physical Needs

After a child was born, parents automatically become responsible. The first duty of parents is to meet children's physical needs for their healthy spiritual and intellectual development. The physical needs of a child can be summarized as proper nutrition, shelter and protection.

In Judaism, it is important that a child's basic physical and emotional needs fulfill for the healthy development. On this account, parents as caretakers, firstly have to provide the best nutrition (breastfeeding) for the child. Breastfeeding is also considered as the way to provide parental love and warmth necessary for the children's development (Yoma 78). If the mother is not able to breastfeed her child, it is allowed to hire a wetnurse (Exodus 2:7-9, Ketubot 60). Along with providing the best nourishment for children, protection, sanitation and clothing are counted as the most basic needs (Maimonides, Yad, Hilchot Ishut, 12; Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 49). According to Halakha<sup>1</sup>, these tasks are carried out by both parents, but the person best suited to look out for a child's interest is mothers (Isaiah 66:13; Proverbs 4:3; Ketubot 59b; Berakhot 7, Reishit Hachmah).

In the New Testament, parents who disregard their children's basic needs is compared to an unbeliever who has a very different lifestyle than a Christian, like this: *"Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* (I. Timothy 5:8; II. Corinthians, 12:14). Paul, in his letter to Timothy, reminds the parents that they should nourish and nurture their children and raise them upon God's commandments (I. Tim 5). In the light of these verses children as vulnerable beings (Genesis 33:13; Deuteronomy 3:19-20; Joshua 1:14) need caring parents who can provide the basic needs of a child such as nourishment, shelter, love, and compassion. In the Synoptic Gospels, the child's vulnerability becomes disease (such as possession, motor disability or disability etc.) Jesus as the healer, offers his mercy to these insubstantial children (Mark 5:21-

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<sup>1</sup> "Halakha is the collective corpus of Jewish religious law, including biblical law (the 613 biblical commandments) and later talmudic and rabbinic law, as well as customs and traditions. Halakha guides not only religious practices and beliefs, but numerous aspects of day-to-day life. Often translated as "Jewish Law", a more literal rendering of the term is 'the path' or 'the way of walking.' "<http://www.fnewworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Halakha> (10.10.2018).

24, 35-43, 7:24-30, 9:14-29; Matthew 21:14-16; Luka 8:42). Jesus describes children as “the most vulnerable with low status” and indicates that to care for them is like caring for him. (Mark 9:37; Mat. 18:5)

In Islam, a human being is a powerless entity that needs to be protected and nourished in infancy and childhood when at his most powerless (An-Nisa, 4/28; An-Nahl, 16/78). It is stated in the hadīths that this is the responsibility of the parents of the individual as following: “*It is sufficient sin for a man that he neglects him whom he maintains.*” (Sunan Abi Dawud 1692, book 9 hadīth no. 1688. See, Sunan Ibn Majah, vol. 5, book 33, hadīth no. 3671; Sahih Muslim 994, book 12, hadīth no. 47). It is seen as the right of alimony to provide all of the costs of treatment, care, education and essential needs such as housing, food, beverages and clothing (Al-Baqarah, 2/233). So much so that in the Qur’an there are verses about the responsibilities of the mother, breastfeeding and what a father should do (Al-Baqarah, 2/233; Al-Ahqaf, 46/15; At-Talaq, 65/6-7). In particular, verse 234 of Al-Baqarah dictates that the provisions concerning a child’s nurse in the context of breastfeeding are based on the fact that it is the father who has to provide the basic necessities for children in halal way (Al-Abasa 80/24, Al-Baqarah 2 /167,172).

Another sign that children are in need of protection is that Abrahamic religions do not allow abortion. In Judaism, to fulfill the commandments to “*Be fruitful and multiply*” (Genesis 1:28; Yevamot 6:6) and to not “waste (male) seed” (Gen. 38:7-10) Jewish families intend to have children (Isa. 45:18). This commandment was repeated when Noah was rescued from the Flood (Gen. 9:1-7). For this reason, contraception and abortion/miscarriage are permitted only under certain cases (Yasdiman, 2001:253) such as a direct threat of the mother’s life (Oholos 7:6). The same conclusion can be reached from the passage regarding punishment for causing miscarriage (Exo. 21:22, Psalm 116: 61; Yevamot 12b). It is believed that Tanakh gives a child to the right of life because they created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

In the New Testament which the main purpose of marriage is not reproduction, there is no prohibition of abortion. However, abortion is considered as a grave sin. The Didache, written at the end of first century, states that “*You shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born*”. St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) also declared that abortion is a sin of murder against nature (contra naturam). The Second Vatican Council defines abortion as an “abominable crime” (See, Lumen Gentium, 25).

Through association, parents ought to reciprocate and bring no harm to children. The Qur’an identifies very evidently that parents are not always protected from negligence or over-protectiveness. On the ground of this acknowledgment, the Qur’an has recognized

certain rules and outlined certain details about children. As per these rules, more precisely, are children's rights to equality and life. Protection of children's life is the third order in Islam (Al-An'am 6:140, 151; Al-Isra 17:31; Al-Mumtahanah 60:12) It is a known fact that in the past Pharaohs commanded to kill all baby boys due to the political worries (Al-Baqarah 2/49; Al-A'raf 7/127; Ibrahim 14/6; Al-Qasas 28/4; Ghafir 40/24-25) and this atrocity continued because of fear of poverty ( Al- An'am 6/151; Al- Isra 17/3) and gender disappointment (Al- An'am 6/137, 140; An-Nahl 16/ 57-59; As-Saf 61/12; At-Takwir 81/8-9) during the age of ignorance (Jahiliyyah). Moreover, in some societies, children were sacrificed to propitiate gods (Al-An'am 6/137). In modern age, to create the perfect racial community by killing physically and mentally disabled children is one of the most tragic historical events. Islam which considers all these activities as element of ignorance and inconsideration bans everything putting a child's life in danger without discrimination on any ground (Al-Isra, 17/31; Al-An'am 6/137, 140,151; Ash-Shuraa 42/13).

Parents should nurture their children's beliefs, meet their physical needs, and help them to develop their mental, emotional, moral and religious aspects. In order for a child to become physically and mentally mature, join society and fit into its roles, it is necessary to meet his main needs appropriately. According to Jewish and Islamic Law, failure of the parents to meet these specific needs, the community and the relatives of child becomes responsible (In Judaism Code of Jewish Law, Choshen Mishpat, 149; Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin, 30; in Islam Abi Dawud, book 12, ḥadīth no. 2271; al- Bukhari 2699, book 53, ḥadīth no. 9).

## **2. Meeting Children's Spiritual Needs**

Although men and women are equal by nature, gender plays an important role in the responsibilities and expectations of a spouse in the holy writings. Specific responsibilities have been assigned to parents in the education of children and home is the primary area of responsibility of mothers. In the holy writings, it is expected from parents, especially from fathers, to teach their children about the unity, the existence and the orders of God. Mothers, on the other hand, have a unique and vital role in the child's life. It is the duty of a woman to create the required home and religious atmosphere for children to be brought up as religious individuals. All the studies written about education put mothers first in the nurturing of children.

In the Tanakh, the roles of parents are defined by saying "*All these men were under the supervision of their father*"(I. Chronicles. 25:6, 25:3). The primary responsibility of children clearly is given to their fathers (Rambam, Hilkhos Talmud Torah 1; Kiddushin 29a; Kitzur

Shulkhan Arukh 165:1; Mishne Berurah 343:2), but the contribution of the mothers are not neglected in the Halakha (Berachot 17a; Chatam Sofer) Fathers are the ones who should make an effort in training their children in God's way (Exo. 10:2, 12:26, 13:8; Gen. 4:9, 6:7, 20, 32:7, 46) in order for them to have spiritual development and good character (Pro. 1:8, 6:20). The most sacred duty of the fathers is to nurture their children and give them a general education. The content of education includes national traditions - covering religious traditions at the same time - and passing on the orders of God (Exo. 10:2) given to their ancestors. A Jewish father is obliged to teach Jewish history as well as religious nurture and what God has done for the Jews. This obligation, expressed in Exodus 13:8, aims to inform the children of Israel about the national salvation from captivity in Egypt (Basalel, 2001: 72).

In Christianity, a man is the leader of his family just Jesus is the leader of the church. Fathers are breadwinners and ancillary teachers while mothers are obedient to their husbands (Ephesians, 5:22-23) and coordinator-teachers (For the role of fathers see: I. Tim. 3:4, 3:12; Colossians 3:11; for mothers, Titus 2:4-5; I. Tim. 5:14, Philippians, 2:14-16). In the New Testament, the father is instructed to protect his children's spiritual world by not exasperating them (Eph. 6:4) and not embittering them (Colossians 3:21). One of the points that draw attention to a child's nurture is the examples given in I Timothy and I Titus. When the preceding chapters are examined, it is requested from the fathers to raise their children under God's sovereignty, presence and love. It is also underlined that those who have failed to do this, are not worthy of taking charge in the church.

As in general opinion and practice, mothers are also the leading nurturers among people in Islam. It is the mother who gives the first principles of education to the child, especially their initial moral education. It has been transmitted in a hadīth as follows: *"A woman came to the Prophet and said: Messenger of Allah (pbuh), my womb is a vessel to this son of mine, my breasts are a water-skin for him, and my lap is a guard for him, yet his father has divorced me and wants to take him away from me. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: You have more right to him as long as you do not marry."* (Sunan Abi Dawud, book 12, hadīth no. 2269). Recent medical findings have shown that nothing can take the place of breast milk and the mother's bosom. In this respect, Islam predicts that the child would remain in the care and nurture of the mother until a certain age (Hökelekli, 1993: 356). When a child is born, he does not know anything and learns everything afterwards, and the Qur'an holds that parents are responsible for nurturing their children (Al-Tahrim 66/6; al-Bukhari 7138, book 93, hadīth no. 2). Although the father is responsible for nurturing, it is expected of the members of the family to undertake this responsibility also (Canan, 2005, 29. See also, Al-Ahqaf, 46/17-18). The leaders of a family who throw family members into the fire by not giving Islamic nurture are

declared as “*the worst of the people*” and “*those who fall into the truthful frustration (suffer damage)*” (Az-Zumar, 39/15-16). The responsibility of parents, however, is to nourish and educate their children as the prophets did. Parents will not be held responsible for their children’s wrong attitudes and behaviours after performing this duty. This is reported in the story of Noah (Hud, 11/41-43). The second lesson that needs to be taken from the story of Noah is related to the communication between the parent and the child. The prophet Noah called his son who was rebellious and refused to believe in Allah, “*My son*”. It is a proof that although children have different characters and personalities, they should be patiently approached and shown compassion and mercy, and the communication language should be based on love and compassion, because a child’s character, parental attitudes and communicative language are key factors in nurturing.

The warnings and the advices in the holy writings have made the question of “*If parents have a responsibility to help nurture the moral and spiritual lives of children, then how do they best carry it out?*” (Bunge, 2008: 354) a current issue. An answer to the question is also sought in the holy writings. In the Bible, the Talmud, the Qur’an and hadīths, parents are given certain instructions on how to nurture their children. These instructions can be listed as follows:

*Age:* One of the important issues related to nurturing is the child’s age because religious development is a process that encompasses mental, emotional and belief development that changes according to individual’s age and sex (Kurttekin, 2017: 90). According to the Talmud, a Jewish father should begin the education by teaching how to read the Scripture at the age of five, Mishnah at ten, to observe commandments at 13, and to study Talmud at 15 (Avot 5:21, Orach Chayim 313). In the New Testament, there is no order or advice about the child’s nurturing age. However, Christian theologians agree that religious nurture given at earlier ages will have a great effect on the rest of a child’s life. As a matter of fact, there are countless sources contributing to children’s religious development and spiritual worlds such as children’s Bibles and story books. In the Qur’an, it is underlined that religious nurture is to be done while a child is young (Al-Isra, 17/24). The Prophet Mohammad stated that the information learned while still young is like embroidery on stone. In the Abrahamic religions, beginning religious nurture at an early age is important in terms of shaping the character and spiritual world of the child. It is easier to learn at an early age. For this reason, during childhood, the child must be able to identify motifs, concepts and personalities associated with every aspect of the religion.

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*Teaching God:* As it is seen in I. Chronicles 28:9 and Proverbs 2:1-5, nurturing children is required to teach who is God and to live in accordance with His commands. Believing in the existence and the oneness of God (Exo. 10:2, 20:2, 20:5; Deu. 4:40), His unity (Deu. 6:4), loving Him (Deu. 6:4-9, 6:5), fearing Him (Deu. 6:13, 31:11-13), worshipping and serving Him (Exo. 23:25; Deu. 6:13, 11:13, 13:15), and enshrining Him (Leviticus 22:32) are other things that must be taught.

In the New Testament, it is expected from parents to teach their children the presence of God (John 17:3) and seek Him who is formed in them, and to help them become like Him (Col. 2:9-11). To become like Him is a journey beginning with learning the Scripture and His commandments (II. Tim. 3:15; Jn. 14:21). It also requires to let the children know the love of God towards mankind (Jn. 3:16, 15:9-17) and His death for their salvation (Romans 5:2-5, 5:8, 8: 37-39; Galatians 2:20; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 Jn. 4:9-11). According to many text the definition of God is love itself (1 Jn. 4:7-8).

In Islam, God's love and fear are the foundation of faith. The first thing to teach a child is tawhid. The existence and oneness of Allah and the command to not associate others with Allah are emphasized in the advice to Luqman's son in the Qur'an (Luqman, 31/13). The Sahabah are also said to have nurtured their children by teaching firstly the tawhid and shahada. (Canan, 2005: 189). It should not be forgotten that the indoctrination of the fear of God that is made at inappropriate times can lead to negative consequences in the soul of the child. Therefore, it would be the right attitude to choose the path of nurture, relying on the love of God, and considering the age and nature of the child.

*Teaching holy books and how to worship:*The Abrahamic religions desire children to be raised in accordance with the orders in the holy writings. It is only possible to begin by teaching the holy books. Moreover, to read the holy books enables believers to fill the heart with joy and to converse with God, and it also responds to the search for the meaning and purpose of life.

In Judaism, a child's education begins at the age of five by teaching them the Torah. (Avot 5:21). According to Jewish scholars, one of the greatest honors for parents is that their children learn the Torah<sup>2</sup>(Basalel, 2001: 43).A father who carry out the task of teaching the Torah to his children considered as if the Torahhad given himself on the Mount Sinai (Deut.

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<sup>2</sup> The name is given to the first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) of the Hebrew Bible.



6:7; Berachot 21b). The Torah and the Talmud<sup>3</sup> are the source of information in a Jewish child's education (Deu 6:6-7, 11:18-19, 31:12-13, 32:45-46; Nehemya 8:3, 8:8; Jeremiah 2:31; Pro. 28:7; Psa. 78:5-6; II. Chro. 6:16; Ezra 7:25; Gal. 3:24). Ezra (BC 600-400), the priest, too, reading and explaining the law in front of the community, made up of old and young, women and men (Neh. 8:1-3, 8:5, 8:13, 8:16-18), is an indication of the importance of scripture teaching and understanding of these books. Because the holy books give information about the past, they try to prevent people from falling into the same mistakes (Deu. 4:9) and fill the heart with joy (Psa., 119:111)

The holy books are the main writings of religions. These writings contain the commandments and stories that parents tell and teach their children (Mt. 4:4). Many Christian theologians also emphasize the importance of reading and discussing holy texts with children. For this reason, holy writings are thought to "be a gold mine that can never be finished and the soul can be fed" (Bunge, 2008: 355). It is a delightful gift for children (Mt. 7:11) to teach the truth in the holy writings (II. Tim. 3:14-17). As indicated in various parts of the New Testament (Ro. 2:19; Gal. 3:24), the holy books are a guide and teacher for people, especially children.

In Judaism and Christianity prayers are considered to be reminder of the presence of God and to share and impart the religious values (Magen Avraham 263:11). Therefore special prayers were written to make with the children on a daily basis (before and after meals, before sleep etc.). To celebrate the religious holidays and to worship have been seen as a situation that strengthens family ties and keeps the religious atmosphere at home alive (Exo. 31:13-14, 20:8; Deu. 5:12).

In Islam, to take advantage of the source depends on being able to read and understand it. The Qur'an is the most important source and guide for children to read and enjoy, as it is a spiritual satisfier as well as a spiritual protector, which is the guidance (Yunus, 10/57) and the rope of Allah that must hold fast (Ali 'Imran, 3/103, Al-'Ankabut, 29/45, Al-Anfal, 8/2; An-Naml, 27/91-92; Fussilat, 41/26). The children are inspired by moral principles such as worship, alongside tawhid belief (Canan 1988:28), as the following verse "*O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is the matters [requiring] determination.*" (Luqman, 31/17. See also Ibrahim, 14/37; Maryam 19/55; Taha, 20/132). In verses and hadiths, it is stated that worship (Ibadah) is the reason behind the existence of mankind on the earth (Fussilat 41/33; Al-Dharyat 51/56). Even if the parents are obligated to teach how to worship their children, the children must follow these

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<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of Tanakh.

commandments by choice (Al- Baqarah 2/256; Al- Ihsan 76/ 3,) and they must be examples to their children by praying.

*Being a role model:* The parents' responsibility as educators is to help protect the child's material and spiritual world. The importance of the parents in religious education is a reality that almost everyone acknowledges nowadays. "All of these theologians and initiatives recognize that faith is not really taught but 'caught' especially by speaking about faith and carrying out religious practices in the home" (Bunge, 2008: 349).

Sayings in the Bible indicate that beliefs, values and traditions are first learned from the family, because the period when the child's personality is shaped is mostly spent with the family. Hence, the text reminds parents to be careful and to set a good example when fulfilling the roles God has given them. In the well-known saying indicated such as "*What the child speaks in the marketplace, he has heard at home from his mother or father*" (Sukkah 53 (Rashi), the children reflect what they have picked up from their parents (See also II. Kings 14:2-3, 16:2, 17:14, 17:41, 18:3, 23:32, 23:37; M. 78:8, 78:57; I. K. 3:14, 15:26, 21:21, 22:53; Pro. 20:7; Ezekiel 20:30; Zephaniah 1:4; II. Chro. 29:2, 34:2; Abr. 3:15; Amos, 2:4). At this point, parents have been taken in charge by God as a reflection and placement of divine reality in their children's lives. This task consists of training, nurturing the belief of their children, and gaining knowledge and skills that will help them to live according to God's warnings and instructions in all phases of their lives, whatever education style parents choose (Col. 1:28; Tit. 2:12).

The portrait drawn of parents in the Quran and hadīths is that of "role model parents" (Al-Baqarah, 2/44; Hud, 11/88; Ibrahim, 14/37; Taha, 20/132; Luqman, 31/17; As-Saf, 61/23; al-Bukhari, vol.6, book 60, hadīth 298; Sunan Abi Dawud, book 2, hadīth 494). The best models for children are parents themselves. Parents who worship on their knees daily will give their children a message that worship is part of everyday life. The children will understand the importance of the Qur'an without anything being said, as long as they see that their parents have read the Qur'an, searched it, and tried to obey God's word.

Some abilities are adopted by following in someone's footsteps. If the actions and discourse of parents are not in parallel, it will be difficult for the child to have these abilities. Being good parents in this sense means raising children who follow their own example in offering thanks to Allah/God and following His commands.

In child rearing, God's instructions and orders advise a modest, corrective, and loving nurturing pattern, because strict and irrational tendencies will absolutely affect a child's faith development. Incorrect methods, unnecessary limitations, extreme expectations, selfishness

and lack of reasoning, etc. can cause negative reactions, and cause children to lose touch with the divine and to think that it is impossible to please parents. Establishing a healthy parent-child relationship depends on the harmony between the parents and child, and being positive and respectful (Pro. 22:6, Psa. 84:11, Messilat Yesharim 11; Col. 3:21, I. Tim. 3:4; Al-A'raf, 7/189; Ar-Rum, 30/21). Children should be treated fairly and moderately by avoiding discrepancies and incompatibilities (Aleī Shor 6:261, Sotah 47a, Gittin 6b; Galatians 6:1; Muslim 1623, Book 24, Hadīth 19). Treating children well, loving them and showing them compassion are the orders of the Abrahamic religions. It is emphasized that equal treatment for their children without discrimination between them is one of the main duties of parents and at the same time the right of a child (Hökelekli, 1993: 356). In particular, the story of Joseph (in the Qur'an see Yusuf 12/4-102; in the Bible see Gen. 37-50) and the events between Abel and Cain (in the Qur'an see Al-Ma'idah, 5/27-32; in the Bible see Gen.4) are actually examples drawing attention that parents should equally treat their children in a loving and compassionate manner. However, the understanding that the family will continue with the boy in the Jewish Law has offered a privileged position in his family. *"Oh! Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."* (I. Samuel 1:11), this example confirms the idea (Aydın, 1989: 197). In addition to making a discrimination between boys and girls, the older boys have certain privileges among boys (Gen. 43:33).

The Abrahamic religions recommend reward and punishment as an effective method in leading to good and avoiding evil. Fear of God (Deu. 4:10, 5:29, 30:12-13; Psa.34:11; Pro. 9:10, 14:26; Jer. 32:39. See also, Fatır, 35/18, 28) and parental fear, more precisely fear of authority figures, are used as the main motive in correcting wrong behaviors. Accordingly, physical punishment (Pro. 22:15, 23:13-14, 13:24, 29: 15-16; Isa. 30:32; Mt. 18:6; ) is seen as a good thing that contributes to the proper upbringing and good character of the child (Pro. 13:24; Rambam, Hilkhoh Geneivah 1:10; Hebrews 12:11). God defines nurturing the moral and spiritual world of the child as painful when it happens, but if pleasing practices accompany it (Heb. 12:11), it is useful for the child's development and education. Although physical punishment is not seen as something pleasant, it is argued that it will actually produce *"a harvest of righteousness and peace."* (Heb. 12:11; Ben Sira 1:1) later on. The method of physical punishment is focused on raising the depicted religious character as emphasized in the Bible (Pro. 29:15). The consequence of lacking in nurturing brings shame to the parents (Pro. 10:1, 15:20, 17:25, 19:13, 19:26, 17:21, 28:7, 30:17; Exodus Rabbah 1:1), and this is the price of the irresponsibility of the parents. While parents who do not discipline their children will be held responsible (I. Sa. 2:23, 3:13), those who follow this order will be blessed (Pro. 23:24,

29:3, 29:17; Ben Sira 13). On the other hand, to beat a child, especially a grown child, is forbidden in a few commandments of the Halakha (Hilchot Teshuva; Responsa Binyamin Zeev 407:1,5). If it is still needed to punish a child with a rod, this must be done with a stick or a whip without causing no harm (Maimonides, Hilchot Talmud Torah 5:2; Bava Batra 21a). To be effective punishment must immediately follow the behavior (Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh 165:7; Tractate Semachot 2:4-6).

The Qur'an does not advise physical punishment as a method of education, and explains the importance of being nice by saying *"And speak to people good [words]."* (Al-Baqarah, 2/83; Al-Isra, 18/53. See, Ali 'Imran, 3/159; Taha, 20/44) The general attitude of the Qur'an is to try to remove the causes that lead children to the wrong path and warn them when they make mistakes. Punishments are kept in the background. The attitude that the prophet Luqman showed his son is a remarkable example of this point. He explained, with the consequences to his son in his advice, what his son should do and what he should not do. At this point, the child is taught to be moderate, balanced and responsible in the cause-and-effect relationship. In verses (Al-Baqarah, 2/25; Ali 'Imran, 3/15; An-Nisa 4/13, 57, 122; Al-Ma'idah, 5/85, 119; At-Tawbah, 9/21, 72, 89, 100; Ar-Ra'd 13/19-25; At-Tahrim, 66/6-8), it is pointed out that the deterrent elements, namely punishments and rewards, differ according to individual differences and characteristics. Therefore, parents should consider consequences and personality before applying reward and punishment. It is narrated by the Messenger of Allah that when a child reaches 10 years old, he can be beaten if he does not pray, and some of the Islamic thinkers allow parents to beat children. However, it was limited by saying that *"They should not paddle before they reach the appeal age (ages 6-7), and tools like sticks and handkerchiefs are preferred to use up to three times except for the head and the battens are forbidden"* (Canan, 2005: 40). This method is applied from time to time, although it is not very common in our society today. Nevertheless, to think of physical punishments such as beating, which dulls the feeling of compassion and destroys self-esteem as a suitable corrective and preventive method, is barely possible. For, it causes shamelessness and insincerity, which can lead to moral weakness and suspicion.

In all cases, the mental and physical characteristics of the child should be taken into consideration. Defects should be corrected in a positive way, by not forgetting that they are not at the age of obedience because the child needs good examples, and explanatory correct information. For this reason, religious education should be based on pedagogical methods such as progressiveness, love, understanding and persuasion (Hökeleki, 1993: 358).

*Moral education:* Another duty of the parents is moral conditioning that is, to help create a moral consciousness in the child. Judaism binds the power and permanence of its values

and institutions to the family and to the religious and moral education given to the family. For this reason, the family should begin to teach religious and moral values to their children in accordance with the Halakha before they become responsible for observing the commandments at the age of 13 for boys and 12 for girls (become a bar/bat mitzvah<sup>4</sup>). The content of moral education is aimed at acquiring personal moral qualities, such as modesty (Num. 12:3, truthfulness (Gen. 18:19), and doing good and avoiding evil (Gen. 30: 3, 5). The reason for the emphasis on moral education in Judaism is that immoral people are doomed to go to Hell (Avot, 5:20). The Talmud reveals that houses have privacy. In this context, gender roles and differences, and how each gender should behave appropriately, are taught. For example, a boy cannot be alone with a girl over three years old nor a woman with a boy over nine years old (Basalel, 2001: 587). One of the dimensions of moral education is how children dress (Gen. 3:21; Nedarim 81; Lev. 19:19). In this respect, there are expressions of how clothing should be patterned to protect children. In particular, the Ten Commandments form the basis of the moral system in the Tanakh. The content of the commandments directly affects the perception of family, family relations, and moral philosophy. When the rules of moral education are taken as a whole, they apply more to women (Yasdımın, 2001: 499).

The verses related to the moral education of children include passing on moral values (Al-Baraqaḥ 2/177; Al-Aḥzab 33/21; Al-Qalam 68/4; Al-Tahrim 66/6; Sunan Al-Bukhārī, 1987, ḥadīth no. 33, 6163, (vol.2, p. 862) 2310), demanding virtue and oppose wrongdoing (Ali ‘Imran, 3/104, 110; An-Nahl 16/90), asking permission for entering someone else’s home (An-Nur, 24/27-28) and their parents’ bedrooms (An-Nur, 24/58-59), dress codes and modesty (An-Nur, 24/31-32; Al-Aḥzab, 33/59). In particular, verse 59 of Surat al-Nur emphasizes privacy issues and the confidentiality of private life, while parents are instructed to teach their children about family intimacy and to ask permission before entering their bedrooms. “Moral values in Islam aim to determine human activity in a Muslim society, and to promote and control their behavior to the benefit of the whole society and its individuals, and to bring for all individuals a good conclusion in the other life. Moral values in Islam then, whether they are individual such as sincerity, patience, charity love, soul combating, or common such as self-feeling, obligation, and call for Islam, are meant to bring individual and society benefit and protect human benefit” (Nuriman&Fauzan, 2017:278). On this, as the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) stated that “The most perfect believer in faith is the one who is best in moral character” (Abū Dāwūd, 2009, ḥadīth no. 4684. See also Al-Bayhaqī, 1994, ḥadīth no. 20571), the lifestyle of a Muslim should be founded on moral grounds. It should not be forgotten that in the matter of moral education, which is a sensitive topic, approaches such as scolding, shouting and making comparisons will be very damaging.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Parents have a duty to identify every child's potential and encourage them to attain it. Although parents will take part in their children's lives for a short period of time, the characters they shape will remain until death. This shows how sensitive and careful parents should be. Throughout the scripture parents are urged to nurture children in God's way. This kind of training needs faith, insight and wisdom. However, there is a discrepancy between practice and teachings in expressing how children should be treated in the Bible. In the Tanakh, it is constantly emphasized that parents keep their children under supervision, while the New Testament contains statements that extend children's rights and restrict parental authority. The issue of a child's nurture is only slightly pointed out whereas the Tanakh provides more details for parents. While the Book of Proverbs in the Bible draws attention to nurturing of children, in the Qur'an, the prophet Luqman's advice to his son reminds parents of their duties.

Children also need to know that their precise way of spiritual life is honored within the learning atmospheres which nurture human spirit. The declaration relies on two rules: children have diverse ways of expressing a yearning to make the earth a better place and secondly there are forms of these particular ways which can be acknowledged, understood and incorporated in parental practice. Human spirituality can be defined as a feeling of connection, a public domain idea which grounds the ability to make a meaning in human lives. The spirit is a communicative entity that creates meaning within itself as well as others, and God and nature are drawn in the direction of completeness if it recognizes its style for bringing a meaning to human lives.

It has also been recognized that every religion aims to raise up individuals on their own bases. In the Jewish tradition, the importance given to religious nurture arises from continuity of the religion and keeping the children away from drifting apart from Jewish tradition. As a Jewish religious scholar stated that: *"To provide the Jewish identity and the Jewish education to our children is more important than restoring any synagogue. Otherwise, the synagogue will not be able to go beyond being an empty museum in the future."* (Basalel, 2001: 5). However, in the rabbinic texts, it is shown that the religious nurture is a task given to fathers (Kiddushin 29a; Ketubot 49a, 65a). In Christianity, a child's religious nurture covers physical care and spiritual training which enables children to grow up becoming more like God. In Islam, the religious nurture focuses on bring the children up as a complete human-being, who believes in only Allah and has a good moral character, by meeting their physical and spiritual needs based on the Quran and the Sunnah.

The Abrahamic religions particular care has showed to two basic pillars of the child's religious nurture. Firstly, the child's development should be taken into account. Secondly, individual differences must be carefully considered and each child should be taught knowledge and attitudes appropriate to his/her abilities. However religious and cultural elements usually define the parental functions and set apart the childhood period. In the holy writings, however, God's clearly specified drive for all youngsters is that they develop into a spiritual maturity. Despite the discrepancies and competition between the Abrahamic religions, they meet on a common ground in some issues. The most important point of this common ground is that being a parent is a crucial responsibility which requires virtues such as love, tolerance, compassion, sacrifice, patience, guidance and support.

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