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A Comparative Analysis of the Meaning-Making Functions of Teachings on Death and the Afterlife in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

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Abstract

Death, loss, suffering, and affliction are fundamental concerns that, in religious traditions, are connected with the meaning of life, justice, moral responsibility, and the relationship between humanity and God. This descriptive, analytical, and comparative study examines the meaning-making functions of teachings on death, the afterlife, affliction, judgment, reward, and punishment in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, drawing on the Bible, the Qur'an, and exegetical works. The findings show that in all three traditions, death is understood as more than a biological event: it is associated with responsibility, hope, and humanity's ultimate destiny, although conceptions of resurrection, judgment, and the relationship between this world and the hereafter differ. In Judaism, historical diversity in conceptions of death and the prominence of covenant, law, and this-worldly justice are significant; in Christianity, eternal

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life is linked to the mission of Jesus Christ; and in Islam, death is understood in the horizon of return to God, the "*Barzakh*," reckoning, divine mercy, and repentance. The study emphasizes that suffering and affliction are not necessarily definitive punishments for sin, and that a responsible interpretation of them requires empathy, seeking treatment, and striving for justice. Teachings on judgment and punishment, moreover, are linked not only to moral admonition but also to mercy, repentance, and responsibility toward others. The article's contribution lies in its integrated analysis of this conceptual network and its distinction among three levels: sacred text, religious interpretation, and functional analysis.

Keywords: Death, Resurrection, Judgment, Function, Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

Introduction

Death is an inescapable reality for all cultures and intellectual systems. Human consciousness of mortality transforms death from a biological occurrence into a semantic and ethical issue. Religious traditions have addressed death within this framework, as seen in the biblical phrase "For dust you are and to dust you will return," (The Bible, Genesis 3:19) the Book of Ecclesiastes' meditations on life's transience (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2; 12:7), and the Qur'an's affirmation of the universality of death and humanity's return to God (Āli 'Imrān:185; al-'Ankabūt:57). These formulations collectively link death to questions of life's meaning and purpose, rather than simply marking the cessation of biological existence. This inquiry extends beyond personal mortality, as experiences of loss, grief, illness, and failure also foreground these existential concerns.

In the present study, death is regarded neither as inherently good nor as simply evil; rather, it is understood as an event that may be accompanied by grief, fear, and a crisis of meaning while also opening a horizon for reconsidering the values of life (cf. Psalms 90:12). In all three traditions, death is not

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understood in isolation but is situated within a network of teachings concerning trial, suffering, judgment, reward, punishment, and humanity's ultimate destiny. In the Hebrew Bible, representations of death are diverse and have developed historically, emphasizing covenant, law, justice, and the value of this-worldly life, though later layers also present a more explicit formulation of resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Kohen, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 362). In Christianity, death is interpreted in light of Christ's resurrection, eternal life, and the responsibility to love others (1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 25:31-46; Augustine, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 922). In Islam, death is linked to return to God, resurrection, accountability, repentance, and the ethical consequences of human actions (al-Baqarah:156; al-Zalzalah:7-8; al-Najm:39-41; Motahhari, n.d.: 4, 576-578).

When approached empathetically, this network of teachings offers resources for rendering suffering meaningful, sustaining hope, and reinforcing moral responsibility. However, these capacities are neither necessary nor universal outcomes of religious belief; their realization depends on religious interpretation, lived experience, psychological condition, and social context. Religion should not be reduced to a mere instrument for alleviating anxiety. Furthermore, these teachings are vulnerable to harmful interpretations: viewing suffering as inevitable punishment for sin can result in victim-blaming and passivity in the face of injustice. The sacred texts themselves challenge such readings. The Book of Job contests hasty associations between suffering and sin (Job 1:1); the narrative of the man born blind rejects direct attribution of suffering to sin (John 9:1-3; Luke 13:1-5); and the Qur'an presents trials in relation to patience, prayer, and positive outcomes, rather

than as judgments on the sufferer's inner state (al-Baqarah:155-157; al-Mulk:2).

The research literature can be summarized in three categories: independent text-centered studies within each tradition (Kohen, 2003 AD/1382 SH; Augustine/Tawfiqi, 2014 AD/1393 SH); comparative studies focused on a single theme, such as resurrection (Bush et al., 2001 AD/1390 SH; Kashi, 2023 AD/1402 SH); and psychological studies examining the relationship between religious belief and death anxiety (Bayat, 2025 AD/1404 SH; Hope, 2003 AD/1382 SH). The present study addresses the gap left by the absence of a continuous comparative analysis that examines these teachings in relation to one another at three levels: text, interpretation, and functional analysis.

The study's novelty is evident in five key areas:

- 1) Analyzing an interconnected conceptual network that includes death, the afterlife, trial, suffering, judgment, reward, and punishment as elements of a semantic and ethical system;
- 2) Distinguishing among the sacred text, theological interpretation, and the researcher's functional analysis to prevent conflation with metaphysical affirmation or denial;
- 3) Maintaining both intra-traditional and inter-traditional diversity, thereby avoiding homogenization of the traditions;
- 4) Simultaneously examining the interpretive potential and risks of these teachings without presuming certainty for either;
- 5) Proposing preliminary criteria for responsible interpretation, such as differentiating empathy from causal explanations of suffering, acknowledging the limits of human knowledge in judging others' destinies, and avoiding the replacement of the pursuit of justice in this

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life with hope for ultimate justice. These aspects are further elaborated in the Findings and Conclusion sections.

Accordingly, the main research question is:

- What role do the teachings concerning death, the afterlife, trial, judgment, reward, and punishment in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam play in interpreting the meaning of life and shaping human responses to suffering, loss, and death?

The sub-questions are:

- How are death and the afterlife formulated in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an?
- What is the relationship between these teachings and justice, mercy, and moral responsibility?
- What capacities do they have for making suffering and loss meaningful?
- What are the potential harms of blame-oriented and fear-inducing interpretations?
- And what place do prayer, repentance, worship, charity, and support for those who suffer occupy in religious responses to the adversities of life?

The article is structured as follows: it first outlines the research method and methodological considerations, then presents the conceptual framework, offers a comparative analysis of the teachings, and concludes with the findings and conclusion.

1. Research Method and Analytical Framework

1.1. Research Method and Data

This study is fundamental in its objective and employs a descriptive-analytical and comparative methodology. Data collection involved documentary research, textual analysis of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, examination of verses from the Holy Qur'an, and review of exegetical, theological, and philosophical sources referenced in the article. In its own conceptual and historical framework, then analyzes its similarities and differences with the other two traditions. Comparative analysis in this article does not mean treating Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as identical. Accordingly, in the discussion of Judaism, a distinction is made among the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic tradition, and later understandings; in the examination of Christianity, attention is given to the distinction between the New Testament texts and various interpretations of resurrection, salvation, and judgment; and in the examination of Islam, a distinction is maintained between the text of the Holy Qur'an and exegetical, theological, and philosophical perspectives.

This article does not attempt to empirically determine whether belief in resurrection or the afterlife reduces anxiety, enhances resilience, or strengthens ethical behavior. Such claims require separate empirical and psychological investigation. Accordingly, the findings address the potential capacities and functions of these teachings, rather than offering definitive, empirically generalizable conclusions for all individuals or religious communities.

1.2. Scope of the Functional Approach

In addressing the functional approach, this study investigates the potential roles and capacities of religious teachings on death, the afterlife, suffering, trial, judgment, reward, and punishment in interpreting life and confronting

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loss. Here, "Function" does not denote empirical or definitive demonstration of the effects of religious belief on mental health or behavior. Instead, it refers to the resources these teachings offer, within the internal logic of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, for understanding death, guiding ethical conduct, confronting suffering, and reconstructing life's meaning.

Accordingly, this study distinguishes the functional analysis of belief in the afterlife from philosophical, theological, or doctrinal proof of its reality. The present study neither seeks to establish the metaphysical reality of the afterlife nor to deny it; rather, it asks how this belief is connected, in the religious texts and interpretations examined, with concepts such as the purpose of life, responsibility, hope, justice, mercy, repentance, and care for others.

Within this framework, the potential functions of teachings concerning death and the afterlife are examined at five levels:

- 1) **Cognitive and interpretive level:** Providing a framework for understanding death, loss, suffering, the transience of life, and human destiny;
- 2) **Emotional level:** Creating or strengthening the possibility of hope, consolation, patience, or greater tolerability of loss for some individuals;
- 3) **Ethical level:** Reminding human beings of their responsibility toward God, themselves, and others, and drawing attention to the consequences of their actions;
- 4) **Social level:** Strengthening empathy, support for those who suffer, mourning rituals, charitable action, and social bonds;
- 5) **Teleological and meaning-making level:** Situating life within a horizon that extends beyond transient worldly successes and failures.

None of these functions should be considered universal, automatic, or assured. The impact of religious teachings varies according to interpretation, lived experience, psychological condition, family context, and social support. For some, these teachings may inspire hope, while for others; they may generate anxiety or guilt. For instance, interpreting suffering as punishment for sin, overemphasizing fear of punishment, or encouraging patience without empathy and practical support can have detrimental effects.

1.3. Three Levels of Analysis

To avoid conflating sacred-textual data, interpretive understandings, and the researcher's own assessment, the analysis in this article is conducted at three levels:

A) Sacred-text level. At this level, the study reports what the Holy Qur'an, the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament state concerning death, the afterlife, suffering, prayer, repentance, judgment, reward, and punishment. At this stage, the direct implications of the texts are kept, as far as possible, distinct from later interpretations.

B) Interpretive and theological level. At this level, the interpretations of exegetes, theologians, religious thinkers, and religious traditions concerning the texts are examined. This level includes different conceptions of *Sheol*, the world to come, resurrection, *barzakh*, bodily resurrection, eternal life, salvation, trial, patience, and the relationship between justice and mercy.

C) Researcher's analytical level. At this level, the researcher analyzes the potential capacities and limitations of these teachings for making death and loss meaningful, strengthening moral responsibility, sustaining hope for justice, fostering empathy toward those who suffer, and avoiding social

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passivity. This level is explicitly distinguished from the sacred-text level and from the reporting of religious interpretations, and it does not claim to represent the direct position of the sacred texts.

1.4. Methodological Considerations and Limitations

First, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are not homogeneous traditions; they are not devoid of internal diversity. Therefore, none of these religions should be reduced to a single verse, a single exegete, a single denomination, or a single theological interpretation.

Second, textual and theological analysis alone cannot establish the psychological and social effects of religious beliefs. Accordingly, expressions such as "May," "Can," "For some individuals," and "Depending on the type of interpretation" are retained in the analysis of the findings.

Third, religious interpretations of suffering should not lead to victim-blaming or to the neglect of the medical, social, economic, and political causes of suffering. Trust in God, trial, patience, and hope for the afterlife cannot replace treatment, prevention, the pursuit of justice, social support, and human responsibility.

Fourth, eschatological judgment, reward, and punishment should not be reduced merely to instruments of fear or social control. In all three traditions, these concepts are connected with justice, mercy, repentance, moral responsibility, and support for those who suffer. However, unbalanced interpretations of them may generate religious anxiety or excessive guilt.

2. Findings and Analysis

This study's findings are based on a comparative analysis of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, verses of the Holy Qur'an, and the exegetical and theological perspectives in the sources used in the article. In this study,

findings does not refer to the empirical demonstration of the psychological or social effects of religious beliefs; rather, it refers to the identification and analysis of semantic, ethical, and interpretive patterns related to death, the afterlife, trial, suffering, judgment, reward, and punishment in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

This analysis shows that these teachings are not separate or disconnected concepts in any of the three traditions. Rather, they acquire meaning in relation to conceptions of God, humanity, moral responsibility, justice, mercy, hope, and human destiny. Nevertheless, these commonalities should not lead to identifying these traditions with one another. Conceptions of death, salvation, judgment, suffering, resurrection, and the relationship between worldly life and the afterlife differ significantly in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish traditions, the New Testament and Christian theologies, and the Holy Qur'an and Islamic exegetical and theological traditions.

2.1. The Concept of Function and the Scope of the Functional Analysis

In this study, the functional approach examines the potential capacities of religious teachings to interpret death, loss, suffering, moral responsibility, and the purpose of life. This approach does not seek to establish the metaphysical or doctrinal truth of teachings concerning resurrection, eternal life, judgment, reward, and punishment based on their potential effects. Nor does the present study claim that all religious believers, regardless of individual, cultural, social, and interpretive differences, respond identically when confronting death and suffering.

Within this framework, death is depicted as neither inherently good nor simply evil. It may involve grief, disrupted relationships, anxiety, physical vulnerability, and a crisis of meaning. The religious teachings analyzed

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interpret death in relation to return to God, mercy, resurrection, judgment, responsibility, and hope. The capacity of these teachings to provide meaning is neither certain nor universal, but is contingent upon lived experience, the quality of relationships, interpretive approach, social support, and psychological condition.

Thus, this functional analysis does not reduce religion to a means of psychological comfort, nor does it assume uniform effects across individuals. Instead, it clarifies the resources that teachings on death and the afterlife offer within each Abrahamic tradition for understanding life, suffering, loss, justice, and human responsibility, while also identifying risks associated with reductive, fear-based, or fatalistic interpretations.

2.2. Death, the Afterlife, and the Purpose of Life

Death is one of the most fundamental human concerns because human beings not only encounter the death of others but also become aware of their own mortality. This awareness can raise questions about the value of life, the place of suffering, the ultimate consequences of human actions, the meaning of loss, humanity's relationship with the world, and the transcendent. However, awareness of death does not have the same consequences for everyone; research evidence also indicates that the relationship between religiosity and death anxiety is heterogeneous and conditioned by multiple factors (Azerbaijani, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 157). For some individuals, death may be accompanied by anxiety, grief, or a sense of meaninglessness (Yalom, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 56). In contrast, for others, awareness of time's limitations may offer an opportunity to reconsider choices, repair relationships, assume greater responsibility, and attend to more enduring and coherent concerns (Thompson, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 20). Others have viewed life through a

theocentric lens and thereby attributed meaning to it (Metz, 2003 AD/1382 SH).

If our everyday lives have no significance within the larger order of existence, they become devoid of meaning; to make life meaningful, human beings must have a role or function in something higher than themselves (Nagel, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 99-100). What matters in the process of meaning-making is the manner in which death is interpreted and situated within a narrative, philosophical, or religious horizon (Mesbah Yazdi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 425-426; Nasri, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 262).

Without denying the possibility of finding meaning in nonreligious worldviews, the present study examines the meaning-making capacities of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic teachings concerning death and the afterlife.

2.2.1. Judaism: Historical Diversity in Conceptions of Death and Hope for Resurrection

In the Hebrew Bible, the representation of death and the realm of the dead is not uniform. In some texts, *Sheol* is presented as the realm of the dead, without a detailed and uniform account of individual reward and punishment after death (Bayer Nas, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 598). In these layers, greater emphasis is placed on the covenant, faithfulness to God, observance of the law, social justice, and life in this world. In later texts, hope for resurrection and differentiation in human destinies become more explicit. For example, Daniel states: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt." (The Bible, Daniel 12:2)

Nevertheless, the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition cannot be defined by a single, fixed model of death and the afterlife. In rabbinic tradition, concepts

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such as the resurrection of the dead and the world to come became prominent. However, understandings of the nature of the afterlife and its relationship to present life have not been uniform across different periods and Jewish movements. In Abraham Cohen's account of Jewish tradition, the theme of hope for the resurrection of the dead is likewise reflected: "Belief in the resurrection is one of the principles of Jewish religion and faith, and its denial is regarded as a grave sin." (Cohen, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 362)

From the researcher's perspective, the relationship between death and life in Jewish tradition may be understood in terms of faithfulness to the covenant, observance of the law, the pursuit of justice, respect for life, and hope in God. This analysis should not overlook Judaism's historical and interpretive diversity or generalize later conceptions of the afterlife to all layers of the Hebrew Bible.

2.2.2. Christianity: Resurrection, Eternal Life, and Hope in the Face of Loss

In the New Testament, hope for resurrection and eternal life occupies a central position and is connected with the person and mission of Jesus Christ (Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. res.*: PG 46, 617B; cf. also DS 325, 359, 369). The Gospel of John states: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) Within the context of *Johannine* theology, this verse connects eternal life with faith and the human relationship with God through Christ (Bush et al., 2011 AD/1390 SH: 738-745).

In Jesus' conversation with Martha after Lazarus' death, hope for resurrection is likewise presented within the context of grief. Jesus says, "Your brother will rise," and Martha responds, "I know that he will rise again in the

resurrection at the last day." Jesus then says, "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:23-25) The *Johannine* narrative, however, does not deny grief, since in the same account Jesus weeps in response to Lazarus's death (John 11:35). Accordingly, hope for resurrection should not be equated with disregarding grief, loss, or the need to accompany those who mourn.

Paul likewise speaks in the First Epistle to the Corinthians about the transformation of human beings in the resurrection and distinguishes between the "Natural Body" and the "Spiritual Body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-49; see also Augustine, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 560) Similarly, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the transient condition of present life is linked to hope for a "Building from God." (2 Corinthians 5:1-8) These verses should not be understood as an invitation to reject the body or disregard earthly life; rather, they concern the transformation of the human condition within the horizon of resurrection and life with God (Augustine, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 533).

From the researcher's perspective, teachings on resurrection, eternal life, mercy, and hope for being in the presence of God may give some Christians a framework in which loss is not understood merely as absolute annihilation. Nevertheless, realizing this potential depends on the mode of interpretation, the individual's lived experience, and the quality of human and social support and it cannot replace natural grieving, empathy, medical care, or support for survivors.

2.2.3. Islam: Death, Return to God, and Resurrection

In the Holy Qur'an, death is presented in connection with creation, return to God, moral responsibility, trial, and resurrection (Jawadi Amoli, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 4, 165-166; Makarem Shirazi, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 5, 193). On the one hand, death is an unavoidable reality: "Every soul will taste death"

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(al-Anbiyā':35); on the other hand, it is not regarded as the end of humanity's relationship with God or of its moral destiny: "It is Allah who created you, then provided for you, then will cause you to die, then will give you life..." (al-Rūm:40)

The Qur'an's emphasis on humanity's return to God, particularly in the phrase "Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return," (al-Baqarah:156) can, in the experience of loss, provide a framework for understanding human dependence upon God and the limited nature of human ownership over one's life, possessions, and relationships (Tūsī, n.d.: 3, 46; Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 2, 883). Nevertheless, this verse should not be interpreted as negating a person's right to grieve, mourn, seek treatment, or protest against injustice.

The Holy Qur'an employs natural examples and various analogies to explain the possibility of resurrection. The revival of the earth after its death is one such example: "...And He revives the earth after its death, and likewise you will be brought forth." (al-Rūm:19; see also Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d.: 8, 99; 11, 24) Likewise, the first creation of the human being is presented as a sign of the possibility of re-creation (al-Qīyāmah:37-40; Yāsīn:78-79). Other verses may also be examined within the Qur'anic framework concerning the possibility and occurrence of resurrection (al-Baqarah:259-260; Āli 'Imrān:49).

At the level of Islamic interpretation and theology, the principle of the continuity of human existence after death and the realization of resurrection are among the fundamental teachings emphasized in the Qur'an and Islamic theology (Motahhari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 5-23; Sobhani, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 5, 11-27). Nevertheless, differing views have emerged among theologians, philosophers, and exegetes concerning details such as *barzakhic* life, the

nature of bodily resurrection, the reality of the soul, and the relationship between the soul and the body in the afterlife (Motahhari, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 79-106; Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 3, 329-357; Sobhani, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 5, 501-550).

Accordingly, comparative analysis should not reduce the "Islamic View" to a single interpretation; rather, a distinction should be made between the fundamental belief in resurrection and the different interpretations of the nature of life after death.

From the researcher's perspective, belief in returning to God and accountability for one's actions may lead some believers to interpret worldly life as a domain of choice, responsibility, repentance, reform, and attention to the rights of others. Nevertheless, such a belief should not result in fear and anxiety, devaluation of earthly life, passivity in the face of oppression, or neglect of medical treatment and support for those who have suffered.

2.2.4. Comparative Summary

The comparative analysis shows that all three traditions connect death with questions concerning life, the human relationship with oneself and with God, moral responsibility, and hope; however, the structure of this relationship is not identical across the three traditions. In the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, the historical diversity and development of conceptions of death and the afterlife are particularly significant, with the covenant, the law, and justice in this worldly life receiving greater prominence. In Christianity, resurrection, eternal life, and hope for salvation are connected with the person and mission of Jesus Christ.

In Islam, death is understood within the horizon of return to God, resurrection, accountability, mercy, and moral responsibility.

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At the functional level, these teachings may give adherents of each tradition resources for reinterpreting death, loss, hope, and responsibility; however, realizing these capacities depends on the mode of interpretation, religious life, individual circumstances, human relationships, and social contexts.

2.3. Trial, Suffering, and the Limits of Religious Interpretations of Suffering

Peter Berger argues that one function of religion is to establish a meaningful order for phenomena that disrupt it, including pain, suffering, and especially death (Berger, 1967: 53-54). Death, illness, loss, poverty, violence, and injustice confront human beings with questions concerning equality, responsibility, the meaning of life, and the relationship between suffering and God (Peterson et al., 2014 AD/1393 SH: 349-350). Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, each through its own theological language and structure, offer ways to interpret these experiences (Hick, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 245-268). Nevertheless, none of these traditions should be reduced to a simplistic, comprehensive explanation that treats every form of suffering as the consequence of sin, weakness of faith, or divine punishment; such a reduction is inconsistent with the internal diversity of these traditions and is also subject to serious theological and ethical dispute.

In the present study, a distinction must be made between two levels: first, the possibility of interpreting certain difficulties within the framework of trial, perseverance, return, responsibility, or moral growth; and second, making a judgment about the specific cause of an individual's illness, poverty, loss, or misfortune. The first level cannot justify the conclusion that every painful event results from sin or reflects weak faith in the person who suffers. Ignoring this distinction may lead to victim-blaming, intensified feelings of

shame and guilt, neglect of the medical and social factors underlying suffering (Sloan, Bagiella, & Powell, 1999: 664-667), or passivity in the face of injustice.

2.3.1. Judaism: Suffering, Questioning, and Protest

In the Hebrew Bible, suffering is associated with concepts such as covenant, faithfulness, justice, prayer, and trust in God (Bush et al., 2011 AD/1390 SH: 663-665). The picture presented, however, is neither uniform nor simple. In some texts, difficulties appear in the context of testing human beings or the community. In contrast, in others, sufferers address God through the language of supplication, questioning, lament, and protest. In rabbinic tradition as well, the suffering of the righteous and its relationship to divine justice have been subjects of debate and have not been reduced to a single explanation (Cohen, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 42).

The Psalms provide an especially important example of this diversity. While trusting in God, the supplicant speaks of fear, loneliness, injustice, and the delay of divine help. In one passage, God is described as just and opposed to violence; the testing of the righteous is also mentioned (Psalm 11:4-7). These themes situate suffering within justice and injustice and never justify blaming the sufferer.

The Book of Job likewise occupies a central place in challenging a simplistic relationship between suffering and sin. At the beginning of the narrative, Job is introduced as a blameless and God-fearing man (Job 1:1; 1:8; 2:3), yet he experiences severe suffering (Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10). His friends try to attribute his suffering to wrongdoing or hidden sin (Job 4:7-8; 8:20; 11:6; 22:5-11), while Job insists on his own integrity (Job 27:5-6; 31:1-40). At the end of the story, God rebukes Job's friends because they have not spoken what is right

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about Him (Job 42:7-8). Thus, the Book of Job does not endorse a hasty explanation of suffering based on personal sin; rather, it emphasizes human beings' epistemic limits in judging the ultimate causes of others' suffering (Job 38-42).

The figure of Job in the Holy Qur'an is presented from a different perspective, emphasizing patience, prayer, and divine relief (al-Anbiyā':83-84; Sād:41-44). This difference demonstrates how a shared figure can be reread within two distinct theological horizons.

2.3.2. Christianity: Prayer, Perseverance, and Love for Those Who Suffer

In the New Testament, suffering and trial are connected with prayer, perseverance, hope, love, and responsibility toward others (Bush et al., 2011 AD/1390 SH: 780). In the Lord's Prayer, one asks God: "Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13; see also Luke 11:4) This request indicates that deliverance from evil and the strength to persevere in difficult circumstances are matters of prayer, rather than making suffering into something desirable or inherently acceptable (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 391).

Several New Testament epistles likewise connect perseverance in hardship with hope (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4). In Christian spiritual tradition, enduring hardship has also been understood in connection with following Christ and cultivating virtue (À Kempis, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 55, 120, 130). Nevertheless, these texts should not be read as commands to remain silent in the face of suffering, accept oppression, or forgo support and treatment. In the account of the man born blind, a direct and simplistic relationship between illness and personal or familial sin is also questioned (John 9:1-3). This narrative prevents the pain, suffering, or illness of any individual from being

definitively attributed to personal or familial sin; this point is also reflected in Christian theology through the teaching that the tribulations of this world befall the righteous and the wicked alike (Augustine, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 33-41).

From the researcher's perspective, Christian hope may, for some individuals, serve as a source of perseverance and empathy in confronting hardship. However, this hope aligns with the New Testament's ethical orientation when it leads to support for those who suffer, practical expressions of love, and resistance to evil (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 530-532).

2.3.3. Islam: Trial through Good and Evil, Patience, and Return

In the Holy Qur'an, trial and testing are central to understanding the human condition in the world; however, these concepts are not limited to calamity and deprivation. The verse "...And We test you with evil and good as a trial, and to Us you will be returned" (al-Anbiyā':35) describes human beings as being tested through both evil and good. Thus, poverty, illness, and loss on the one hand, and blessings, power, and wealth on the other, may all fall within the horizon of trial.

In Surah *al-Baqarah*, human beings are likewise described as being tested through fear, hunger, and the loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. At the same time, those who are patient are identified as those who, when afflicted by calamity, say: "Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return." (al-Baqarah:155-156; see also Ṭabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 2, 883) These verses remind human beings of their vulnerability and their return to God; however, they cannot be taken to mean that every calamity and instance of suffering results from personal sin or punishment.

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At the interpretive level, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī understands the phrase "Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return" as referring to human awareness of belonging to God and returning to Him; according to his interpretation, this awareness may reduce the intensity of distress and agitation (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, n.d.: 1, 252). Similarly, some contemporary interpretations associate patience with perseverance in fulfilling one's responsibilities and obeying God (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 11, 675-676; 4, 162).

Nevertheless, in the present analysis, patience does not mean passive acceptance of oppression, abandoning medical treatment, overlooking the rights of those afflicted by calamity, or remaining silent in the face of preventable causes of suffering. Patience may be understood as perseverance in difficult circumstances, preservation of dignity and self-respect, self-restraint, continuation of ethical action, recourse to legitimate means to improve one's circumstances, and hope in God's mercy.

2.3.4. Comparative Summary

In all three traditions, suffering can be understood within the horizon of the human relationship with God and ethical life; however, they differ in their textual sources and how they formulate the issue. In the Hebrew Bible, prayer, lament, protest, justice, and covenant faithfulness are prominent. The New Testament emphasizes prayer, resilience, hope, love, and care for the suffering. In the Qur'an, trial is associated with both good and evil, patience, return to God, reliance upon God, and moral responsibility.

Accordingly, a responsible reading of religious teachings on suffering should avoid blaming the victim, fatalism, justifying injustice, neglecting specialized treatment, and disregarding social responsibility. When confronting a

grieving, ill, impoverished, or violence-affected person, empathy, attentive listening, practical support, the pursuit of justice, and, when necessary, referral to professional services should take precedence over any hasty religious interpretation of that person's suffering.

2.4. Judgment, Reward, and Punishment: Justice, Mercy, and Moral Responsibility

Teachings on judgment, reward, and punishment in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam connect to questions of justice, moral responsibility, the suffering of the innocent, the prosperity of wrongdoers, and the value of human action. In all three traditions, these teachings are not merely accounts of the human destiny after death; they also place present life within a framework of accountability, justice, mercy, repentance, and responsibility toward others.

Nevertheless, the three traditions differ in how they formulate judgment, salvation, reward, and punishment. Beyond differences among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, each tradition also offers diverse interpretations of the relationship between justice and mercy, faith and works, repentance and punishment, and the ultimate destiny of human beings. Accordingly, the present comparative analysis does not seek to reduce these traditions to a single model.

2.4.1. Judaism: Covenant, Justice, and Social Responsibility

In the Hebrew Bible, God's justice is closely connected with observance of the law, faithfulness to the covenant, and responsibility toward others. In the Torah, obedience to God's commandments and love of God are accompanied by support for strangers, orphans, widows, and those in need (Deuteronomy 10:12-19; 15:7-11; 24:17-22). The impartial administration of justice is likewise among the social requirements of the law (Leviticus 19:15-18;

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Deuteronomy 16:18-20). This orientation also continues in Jewish interpretive tradition, as evidenced by the central place given to charity, benevolence, support for those in need, and the administration of justice in Talmudic literature (Cohen, 2003 AD/1382 SH: Chapter "Social Life: Benevolence and Charity," p. 207). In many prophetic texts, criticism of oppression, neglect of those in need, and violation of the rights of the oppressed forms part of the religious call; thus, Isaiah calls for learning to do good, seeking justice, and defending the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow (Isaiah 1:16-17), while Jeremiah emphasizes the administration of justice and refraining from oppressing the stranger, the orphan, and the widow (Jeremiah 22:3). Amos and Isaiah likewise challenge worship and fasting when accompanied by injustice and indifference to the suffering of those in need (Amos 5:21-24; Isaiah 58:6-7). Micah also calls on human beings to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

Nevertheless, the depiction of eschatological judgment and individual reward and punishment is not presented with the same clarity and detail throughout all layers of the Hebrew Bible. Several passages focus primarily on the consequences of human conduct in collective and earthly life. For example, in Deuteronomy, obedience or disobedience to divine commandments is associated with blessing and adverse consequences in the community's national and historical life (Deuteronomy 28:1-14, 15-68; Leviticus 26:3-39). In later texts, such as Daniel, hope for resurrection and differentiation among human destinies become more prominent: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2-3) This gradual prominence of hope for resurrection and the world to come is also widely reflected in post-biblical

Jewish literature (Cohen, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 362; Bush et al., 2011 AD/1390 SH: 664). This gradual shift in emphasis—from collective and this-worldly consequences toward an individual and trans-historical hope, has also been documented in historical studies of Jewish tradition (Hume, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 10, 276).

The Book of Job, the Psalms, and Ecclesiastes, by raising the problem of the suffering of the righteous and the apparent prosperity of the wicked, avoid reducing the relationship between moral conduct and human destiny to a direct, certain, and one-sided pattern in this worldly life. The Book of Job explicitly raises questions concerning the suffering of the innocent and the relative prosperity of the wicked (Job 9:22-24; 21:7-13), while Ecclesiastes draws the reader's attention to the apparent similarity between the earthly destinies of the righteous and the wicked, as well as to the reversal of expected rewards (Ecclesiastes 7:15; 8:14; 9:2, 11-12). The Book of Psalms likewise addresses the prosperity of the wicked and the limitations of human judgment concerning their ultimate destiny (Psalms 37:1-7, 35-36; 49:5-15, 16-20; 73:2-3, 16-17).

This diversity of texts shows that, in the Hebrew Bible, divine judgment and justice are not formulated solely in terms of immediate and individual reward and punishment. Rather, an internal tension and dialogue runs among the collective and historical sphere of the covenant, the complex experience of suffering in the present life, and the later hope for resurrection and ultimate destiny. Accordingly, wisdom texts, by criticizing a simplistic association between suffering and sin, remind human beings of their limitations in judging the moral condition of others. Within this framework, teachings on

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judgment can reinforce moral responsibility and hope for justice without giving a license to attribute people's suffering to hidden sins.

2.4.2. Christianity: Judgment, Mercy, Faith, and Works

In the New Testament, judgment is connected to human accountability before God and to the way individuals relate to others. In the Gospel of Matthew, individuals are held accountable for their words (Matthew 12:36). At the same time, the Book of Revelation depicts the dead being judged according to their deeds (Revelation 20:12).

In the judgment scene in the Gospel of Matthew, attention to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, strangers, the sick, and prisoners is connected with human accountability before God (Matthew 25:31-46). This connection between judgment and practical expressions of love is also articulated in the Catholic Church's official teaching (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2014 AD/1393 SH: Section "The Last Judgment," p. 319). This emphasis is also evident elsewhere in the New Testament: each individual is presented as accountable for his or her own conduct before God (Romans 14:12); all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10); and divine judgment will be based on human deeds and carried out impartially (Romans 2:6-11).

The link between final judgment and practical responsibility toward the suffering of others, rather than reducing it to a mere assessment of inner belief or fear of punishment, has also been emphasized in the Christian theological tradition (Augustine, 2014: bk. 20, chs. 1-5, 913-922; à Kempis, 2004: bk. 1, ch. 24, 90).

At the same time, interpretations of the relationship among grace, works, faith, and salvation vary across Christian traditions (Bush et al., 2011

AD/1390 SH: 738-745); therefore, no single theory of salvation and judgment should be attributed to Christianity as a whole.

2.4.3. Islam: Accountability, Justice, Mercy, and Repentance

In the Holy Qur'an, final judgment is inseparable from divine justice, individual responsibility, and recompense proportionate to human actions. In describing the Day of Resurrection, the Qur'an states: "Today every soul will be recompensed for what it has earned. No injustices will there be today. Indeed, Allah is swift in reckoning." (Ghāfir:17) On the one hand, this verse emphasizes the principle of individual responsibility and accountability through the expression "Every soul for what it has earned," while on the other hand, through the phrase "No injustice will there be today," it negates any form of injustice and inequity from divine judgment (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 17, 338; Marāghī, n.d.: 24, 37; Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 19, 285-287). The Qur'an presents God as a judge who judges with truth (Ghāfir:20) and makes a fundamental distinction between those who commit evil and those who believe and perform righteous deeds (al-Jāthīyah:21). At the same time, it articulates the principle of individual moral responsibility by denying that one person may bear another's burden of sin: "No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another." (al-An'ām:164; see also al-Isrā':15)

Verses such as "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" indicate a precise correspondence between human actions and their consequences (al-Zalzalah:7-8). Likewise, the verse "And they will find present whatever they did, and your Lord does not wrong anyone" portrays the presence of deeds and the absence of injustice on the Day of Judgment (al-Kahf:49).

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Nevertheless, judgment in the Qur'an is not solely punishment-oriented or fear-inducing, since the call to repentance and the prohibition against despairing of divine mercy are presented alongside responsibility and accountability (al-Zumar:53). This balanced relationship among justice, responsibility, and mercy has likewise received attention in the Islamic exegetical tradition (Zamakhsharī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 4, 90; Tabrisī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 7, 193; Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 23, 300; Ālūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 9, 269). Accordingly, a balanced interpretation of eschatological judgment must simultaneously preserve human moral responsibility, divine justice, and the possibility of repentance and mercy.

At the level of the researcher's analysis, belief in divine accountability may, for some believers, motivate them to monitor their conduct, take others' rights seriously, and refrain from injustice. However, when such belief is accompanied by a fearful, one-sided image of God, chronic guilt, religious scrupulosity, the denigration of others, or judgment about individuals' fates, it may have harmful consequences.

2.4.4. Comparative Summary

Across all three traditions, divine judgment and justice are linked to human moral responsibility; however, the textual sources, theological language, and emphasis on the various dimensions of this relationship differ. In the Hebrew Bible, justice is particularly closely connected to covenant, law, communal life, and support for the oppressed. In the New Testament, judgment is intertwined with faith, mercy, and love of one's neighbor, works, and salvation. In the Qur'an, mercy, repentance, divine justice, accountability, reward, punishment, and individual responsibility are closely interrelated.

Accordingly, belief in eschatological judgment may, for some individuals and groups, provide a basis for moral resistance to injustice and for maintaining hope in justice. However, this hope should not replace responsibility for reducing preventable suffering, supporting those harmed, and reforming unjust structures. Likewise, God's final judgment should not become a license for hasty human judgments concerning one another's character, or concerning the faith, salvation, and punishment of others.

Table: A Concise Comparative Model of Meaning-Making Functions and Critical Considerations

Analytical Dimension	Judaism	Christianity	Islam	Analytical and Critical Consideration
Death and the Afterlife	Conceptions of death and postmortem destiny are not uniform across the layers of the Hebrew Bible; in later texts, hope for resurrection becomes more prominent (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19).	Resurrection and eternal life are linked to the person and mission of Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 11:23-26; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49).	Death is not an absolute end but rather a stage in the return to God, resurrection, and accountability (Al-Mu'minūn 23:15-16; al-Rum 30:19, 40).	It may provide a framework for interpreting loss and the meaning of life; however, it should not lead to the denial of grief, the devaluation of the body, or indifference toward earthly life.
Trials and Suffering	The Psalms and the Book of Job open space for	Suffering is not directly attributed to	Trials are connected with the testing of	None of these teachings provides a license

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	prayer, lament, and protest, while limiting simplistic explanations of suffering (Psalms 13; Job 42:1-8).	the sin of the individual or their family; prayer for deliverance from evil, perseverance, and practical love toward those who suffer are emphasized (John 9:1-3; Matthew 6:13).	good and evil, patience, returning to God, and moral responsibility (al-Anbīyā' 21:35; al-Baqarah 2:155-157).	to categorically attribute an individual's suffering to sin or weakness of faith; treatment, social support, the pursuit of justice, and empathy remain essential.
Judgment, Reward, and Punishment	Justice is linked to covenant, law, and social responsibility; the formulation of eschatological judgment is not uniform across all layers of the text (Micah 6:8; Daniel 12:2).	Judgment is linked to mercy, faith, works, and responsibility toward those in need (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 15:11-32; Revelation 20:12).	Accountability is accompanied by justice, mercy, repentance, and the moral consequences of actions (Ghāfir 40:17, 20; al-Jāthīyah 45:21; al-Zumar 39:53).	Eschatological judgment should not be regarded merely as an instrument of fear or social control; a balanced reading should maintain justice, mercy, repentance, epistemic humility, and responsibility toward others simultaneously.

Religious and Ethical Responses to Adversity	Prayer and ritual mourning, repentance, social justice, and care for the disadvantaged (Leviticus 19:18; Isaiah 58:6-7).	Prayer and repentance, love of one's neighbor, and practical service to those in need (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:35-40).	Prayer, repentance, worship, charity, and assistance to those in need (al-Baqarah 2:177; al-Mā'idah 5:2; al-Insān 76:8-9).	These practices shift religious engagement with suffering from passive waiting toward practical responsibility; however, they are not substitutes for treatment, professional care, or the reform of structural conditions that produce suffering.
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Source: Compiled by the authors based on the verses and references cited in the article

Conclusion

Using a descriptive–analytical method and a comparative approach, the present study demonstrated that:

1. The teachings concerning death, the afterlife, trials, judgment, reward, and punishment in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam transcend death and the adversities of life as merely biological, accidental, or individual events, connecting them instead to the human relationship with God, justice, mercy, hope, moral responsibility, and the purpose of life. This meaning-making function is neither uniform nor inevitable; rather, it depends on how the texts

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are interpreted, theological traditions, individuals' lived experiences, social circumstances, and the quality of individual, familial, and communal support.

2. The conceptualization of death and the afterlife in the three traditions contains both fundamental commonalities and significant theological differences. In the Hebrew Bible, this conception is not uniform: "Alongside an emphasis on the value of earthly life, covenant, law, and social justice, hope for resurrection and final judgment becomes more explicit in later texts," (Daniel 12:2-3; Isaiah 26:19) eventually becoming central to the doctrine of the "World to Come" in post-biblical tradition (Cohen, 2003: Section "The World to Come," p. 362). The New Testament interprets death in light of Christ's resurrection, salvation, love of others, and eternal life (John 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 54-57; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 211-214, 219), while the Holy Qur'an regards it not as the absolute end of life, but as a stage in the journey of returning to God, being resurrected, undergoing accountability, and confronting the consequences of one's actions (al-Baqarah:156; Āli 'Imrān:185; al-Mu'minūn:15-16; al-'Ankabūt:57; Tajabadi, 2017 AD/1396 SH: 75-88). Thus, despite differences in language and theological emphases, all three traditions relate death to human responsibility and ultimate destiny.

3. The relationship among trials, judgment, reward, and punishment, on the one hand, and justice, mercy, and moral responsibility, on the other, cannot be reduced to a simple and one-directional relationship between suffering and sin. The Book of Job challenges hasty judgments concerning the causes of suffering and sin (Job 42:1-6). The account of the healing of the man born blind rejects the direct attribution of suffering to sin, while, alongside judgment, emphasizing mercy, forgiveness, repentance, and love of one's

neighbor (John 9:1-3; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 15:11-32). In the Qur'an, final judgment is linked to divine justice, individual responsibility, and the consequences of actions (Ghāfir:17, 20; al-Jāthīyah:21-22; al-Kahf:49), while the principle that "No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another" establishes personal responsibility and opens the way to repentance and mercy (al-An'ām:164; al-Zumar:53). Therefore, reward and punishment are not merely instruments of fear or behavioral control; rather, they are connected with accountability, justice, mercy, the possibility of return, and responsibility toward others. Furthermore, differences among the layers of the Hebrew Bible, interpretive disagreements within Christian traditions about the relationship between faith and works in salvation, and the diversity of theological views in Islam on intercession, mercy, and eternal punishment prevent any of these traditions from being reduced to a single model.

4. These teachings provide potential resources for making sense of suffering, loss, and death. Belief in ultimate justice may prevent apparently unanswered injustices from constituting the only horizon of reality; hope in resurrection may, in the experience of grief, make possible reflection on the continuity of the human relationship with God and the meaningfulness of life. The doctrine of trials, when interpreted cautiously and without blame, may provide a basis for patience, moral self-reflection, empathy, and stronger group bonds. Nevertheless, these capacities are neither inevitable nor universal consequences of religious belief, since individuals' responses to suffering and grief vary according to personal characteristics, cultural context, economic and social conditions, religious background, and access to professional and social support.

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5. Fear-inducing, blame-oriented, and fatalistic interpretations may be harmful and may lead to blaming the suffering individual, intensifying feelings of guilt and shame, silencing moral protest against injustice, and neglecting the medical, psychological, economic, and social factors underlying suffering. Likewise, reducing eschatological judgment to threat and fear may increase religious anxiety and marginalize mercy, repentance, and justice. The account of Job, the Lamentations and the Psalms, Jesus' call to love and care for those in need, and the Qur'an's emphasis on patience, mercy, repentance, justice, and assistance to others all prevent suffering from being regarded as a definitive sign of a person's rejection by God (Psalm 13; Job 42:7-8; Matthew 25:35-40; al-Baqarah:155-157; al-Mā'idah:2; al-Zumar:53).

6. Prayer, repentance, worship, charity, and support for those who suffer in all three traditions have, in addition to their ritual dimension, ethical and social dimensions. The language of prayer in the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Christian prayer tradition, and the Qur'anic verses is not merely a language of reassurance; at times, it is a language of questioning and lament, and at other times, a language of supplication and hope. In the Christian tradition of piety, prayer and repentance have likewise been understood less as a means of immediately removing suffering than as inner consolation and submission to God amid adversity (à Kempis, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 173-184). In all three traditions, repentance opens the possibility of return, reform, and breaking free from despair, while charity, love of one's neighbor, almsgiving, and care for the poor demonstrate that religious engagement with suffering is not limited to inwardness or passive waiting but is connected with practical responsibility toward suffering human beings (Leviticus 19:18; Isaiah 58:6-

7; Matthew 25:35-40; Luke 10:25-37; al-Baqarah:177; al-Mā'idah:2; al-Insān:89).

7. On this basis, four preliminary criteria may be proposed for a responsible reading of these teachings: "Distinguishing empathy with the sufferer from a causal explanation of their suffering; respecting the limits of human knowledge when making judgments about individuals' ultimate destinies; avoiding the substitution of hope in ultimate justice for the pursuit of justice and the reduction of suffering in the present life; and simultaneously considering the medical, psychological, social, and economic factors contributing to suffering alongside its religious interpretation."

8. Overall, the teleological and meaning-making function of these teachings can be understood only in connection with a broader network of religious and ethical concepts, including covenant, justice, mercy, love, repentance, responsibility, and helping others. In empathetic and responsible interpretations, these teachings can serve as resources for understanding loss, maintaining hope, reflecting on the purpose of life, and strengthening moral commitment. However, when detached from their textual and ethical contexts and interpreted in a deterministic, punishment-centered, or blame-oriented manner, they may, rather than reducing suffering, add burden to it.

9. A functional analysis of these teachings does not entail proving or disproving their metaphysical truth. Rather, it examines their potential capacities and risks within human religious and ethical life. The principal contribution of this study is to demonstrate the intrinsic interconnectedness of death, the afterlife, trials, judgment, reward, punishment, and the meaning of life across the three Abrahamic traditions, while preserving the theological distinctiveness of each tradition and critically attending to the constructive

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potentials and possible harms of religious interpretations of suffering and death.

Research Novelty

1. Integrated analysis of a conceptual network: The study examines death, the afterlife, trials, suffering, judgment, reward, and punishment not as separate subjects but as components of an interconnected semantic-ethical network within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, a network linked to interpretations of life, loss, justice, mercy, responsibility, and human ultimate destiny.

2. Distinguishing three levels of text, interpretation, and researcher analysis: The article distinguishes among the meanings conveyed by the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Holy Qur'an; the theological and doctrinal interpretations of religious traditions; and the researcher's functional analysis. This distinction prevents functional analysis from being conflated with either proving or disproving the metaphysical truth of eschatological teachings.

3. Avoiding homogenization of the traditions: In addition to preserving differences across traditions, the analysis maintains diversity within each tradition, including the heterogeneity of the layers of the Hebrew Bible in their formulations of judgment and resurrection, as well as interpretive disagreements concerning the relationship among faith, works, and human destiny. Accordingly, none of the three traditions is reduced to a single model.

4. Simultaneously examining interpretive potentials and risks: The study examines the potential of these teachings to provide meaning to loss, sustain hope for justice, strengthen moral responsibility, and encourage support for others, alongside the risks of fear-inducing, fatalistic, blame-oriented

interpretations that disregard treatment and social responsibility, without regarding any of these outcomes as inevitable or universal consequences of religious belief.

5. Formulating preliminary criteria for responsible interpretation: Based on the preceding analysis, a set of preliminary criteria is proposed, including distinguishing empathy with the sufferer from a causal explanation of their suffering, respecting the limits of human knowledge in judging individuals' ultimate destinies, and avoiding the substitution of hope in ultimate justice for the pursuit of justice and the reduction of suffering in the present life.

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