

# Exploring The Verdict On Cousin Marriage In Semitic Religions: Judaism, Christianity, And Islam

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## Abstract

Marriage can be defined as a ritual or legal contract in any culture by which society, law, and religion accept an intimate sexual and marital relationship between a man (husband) and a woman (wife). As a result, a new family is added to society, and the resulting children are given recognition and legal protection. The research is an endeavor to solve the problem that lies in cousin marriage with regards to all three Semitic religions, i.e., Jews & Christians, and Islam. In addition to references from the Holy Quran and practices of the Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), incestuous marriages and cousin marriage verdict has been elaborated substantially through references found in the literature of these three Semitic religions to nullify the misconceptions of the masses.

**Keywords:** Cousin's marriage, Jews, Christians, Islam, Semitic Religions.

## Introductions:

"Islam is the true religion, providing a comprehensive guide to life given by Allah, the Creator and Lord of the universe. The story of human creation begins with Prophet Adam عليه السلام, and the first marriage in the world was between him and Eve. This event marked the beginning of the spread of mankind."

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

- O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. (Surah Al Hujaraat 49:13)

To sustain the human race, Allah established relationships of honor and respect in the world, and these relationships are established only because of marriage-

Marriage is the only way to conceive children and legally preserve their lineage.

Due to their conventions and manners, most societies prefer to marry close relatives, which preserves the family name and links. However, cousin marriage harms people, and numerous religious explanations are given for this.

There is a need to examine the teachings of cousin marriage in Semitic religions i.e. Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

### **Basic Research Questions**

What are the Islamic tenets about cousin marriage?

What do Christianity and Judaism say about cousin marriage?

### **Research methodology:**

The prevalent rules and practices regarding cousin marriage have been observed comparatively in Islamic Sciences. The Islamic sciences material has been taken from the Holy Quran, Hadith, and biographical literature. While the injunctions related to Judaism and Christianity have been extracted from the literature of both religions accordingly.

### **Literature review**

1. Mohammad Shoaib wrote a book called "Cousin Marriage Halal ya Haram."

2. Similarly, Zahid Hussain Sahib wrote a piece in favor of "Cousin Marriage" in response to the idea that cousin marriage is against Islamic law.

3. AnikaNaz published a blog post named "Cousin Marriage aikaurtajzia" on her website.

### **Discussion**

#### **Semitic Religions:**

The term "Semitic religions" refers to religions that originated from the descendants of Shem, the son of Noah. This category

includes Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. These religions are known for their shared cultural and linguistic heritage. While each religion has its unique beliefs and practices, they are all considered Semitic due to their shared ancestry. These are also called ILHAMI religions. It's important to note that while all three of these religions have elements of divine inspiration or revelation, they each have distinct beliefs, scriptures, and practices. (Al Masdoosi, 2002AD, 23)

### **Meaning of word Kinship(قربانیت)**

The term "cousin" is used in English and borrowed in Urdu, but the correct term in Urdu literature for "cousin" is "kinship" (قربانیت) or "relatives." The word "kinship" is derived from the Arabic verb "to be near" or "to be closely related." (Ibn-e-Manzoor, 1414 H.)

### **Cousin Marriage in the light of Islam**

Religious injunctions regarding relationships are clear, and marriage is considered sacred. God has established boundaries for it. The following is a list of relationships that have been deemed impermissible until the end of time:

- Relationships that have been prohibited (Haraam) until the Day of Judgment.

“Do not marry former wives of your fathers—except what was done previously. It was indeed a shameful, despicable, and evil practice. ‘Also’ forbidden to you for marriage are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal and maternal aunts, your brother’s daughters, your sister’s daughters, your foster-mothers, your foster-sisters, your mothers-in-law... (Sura Nisa 4:23)

"Both stepmothers and biological mothers are referred to as 'Mother' and are thus forbidden from marriage. It includes the

father's mother and the mother's mother as well. The commandments of Bethel extend to granddaughters and great-granddaughters. The verse lists all the relatives with whom marriage is prohibited in detail, but does not mention cousins, suggesting that they are not included in the prohibitions."

In addition to the prohibitions listed in the previous verse, it is clearly stated in the following verse, "Whoever you choose to marry, honor their rights, and treat them with dignity and respect".

وَأَجَلَ لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَتَّبِعُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا.

Lawful to you are all beyond these—if you seek them with your wealth in a legal marriage, not in fornication. Give those you have consummated marriage with their due dowries. It is permissible to be mutually gracious regarding the set dowry. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Sura Nisa 4:24)

Similarly, in another place, Allah Ta'ala gives permission to his beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) and mentions cousin relationships separately and says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ اللَّاتِيَّاتِ أَتَيْتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ.....

"O Prophet! We have made lawful for you your wives to whom you have paid their 'full' dowries as well as those 'bondwomen' in your possession, whom Allah has granted you. And 'you are allowed to marry' the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts, and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts, who have emigrated like you".

(Surah Qaaf 50:41)

Based on this verse, Allah, the Exalted, gave him the authority to marry any of his female emigrant relatives. In this verse, it is also

clear that the daughters of uncles, maternal uncles, and aunts are lawful for a Muslim.

In the light of Quranic verses, it has become clear that cousin marriage is permissible. Therefore, the second primary source of Sharia is the Sunnah. Now let us shed light on this subject from the Sunnah.

### The kinship of Hazrat Umm Habiba رضي الله عنها to the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Hazrat Umm Habiba رضي الله عنها belongs to the famous family of Quraysh, Banu Abdul Shams, and her genealogy is as follows: Umm Habiba bint Abi Sufyan Sakhar bin Harb bin Umayya bin Abdul Shams bin Qusay bin Kalab bin Marah bin Ka'b bin Lui. (Al Asqalani(1415 AD,140)

Her genealogy traces back to the Prophet ﷺ in the fourth place; her great-grandfather Umayyah's father Abd al-Shams and the great-grandfather of the Prophet ﷺ Hashim were brothers. Likewise, the genealogy of her mother, SafiyyahbintAbul As bin Umayyah bin Abdul Shams bin Qusay bin Kalab bin Murah bin Ka'b bin Lui-

(Ibn e Saad,M.S(1408 AD, 8/76)

Habiba RA is a relative of Rasulullah SAW on both sides. Your marriage indicates that there is no harm in marrying a cousin.

### Hazrat Zainab bint Jahsh رضي الله عنها

Her first name was Burah. She named Zainab after marriage. Her full name was Zainab bint Jahsh رضي الله عنها. Her father's name was Jahsh bin Riyab. Her mother's name was Umaymahbint Abdul Muttalib, and she was the aunt (father's sister) of the Messenger of Allah. (Ibn e Saad, (1408 AD, 8/101)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ married her in the year 5 AH. She was the cousin of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

Ibn e Saad,(1408 AD, 8/114)

**Hazrat Ali** *رضى الله عنه*

Hazrat Ali *رضى الله عنه* was the son of his real uncle of the Holy Prophet, and he married his beloved daughter Hazrat Fatimah *رضى الله عنها* to Hazrat Ali *رضى الله عنه*.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that cousin marriage has not been discouraged at any point from the Islamic teachings-

So, there is no wrongdoing in marrying those relations which have been mentioned above.

**Cousin Marriage in Judaism**

Among the Semitic religions, Judaism is the oldest one, to whom Allah gave the Book, The Torah. It is limited only to Bani Israel. Judaism is an ethnic religion that prohibits intermarriage with people of other religions. In Judaism, marriage is considered a bond between a man and a woman in which God Himself is involved.

When a man taketh a wife, and marieth her, then it cometh to pass, if she finds no favor in his eye”.

Deuteronomy 24:01

When a man and a woman get married, they are considered as one soul in two bodies. According to the Talmud, a person who does not get married is considered incomplete. In Judaism, a marriage ceremony is divided into two parts i.e., Betrothal and Matrimony. The first part is engagement(betrothal): the announcement that the man or woman is going to marry now.

And the second part is marriage (Matrimony). Marriage is the ceremony in which a woman now becomes wife of her betrothed (fiancé). After this woman cannot marry anyone else until her husband dies or divorces.

(Jewish Encyclopedia, p 1272.)

**Forbidden relationships (mahramat-nikah) in Judaism.**

Since Judaism is a divine religion, its teachings mentioned (mahramat-nikah) relationships that are forbidden for a Jew to marry. None of you should go to a close relative to uncover her body.

“The nakedness of thy father, and the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness” (Leviticus 18:07)

**Mother**

Children have a sacred relationship with the mother, marriage with her is forbidden.

“The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it

is thy father's nakedness. (Leviticus 18:08)

**Sister**

Like a mother, marriage with a sister has also been forbidden.

“ Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother”. (Deuteronomy 27:22)

**Grand Daughter**

Like a daughter, a granddaughter cannot be married.

“The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover; for theirs is thine own nakedness ”. (Leviticus 18:10)

**Mother-in-law**

Mother-in-law is also included in those who are forbidden to marry.

“Cursed be he that lieth with his mother-in-law-“

(Deuteronomy 27:23)

### **AUNT**

Aunt is a respectable personality for kids because she is a sister of his father, so he is not permitted to marry her.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman'.  
(Leviticus 18:12)

### **Maternal Aunt**

Like a mother, marriage with her sister has also been forbidden.

“Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister; for she is thy mothers near kinswoman”.  
(Leviticus 18:13)

### **Aunty (uncle's wife)**

Because the uncle is valued in the same way that the father is, it is not permitted to marry his wife.

(Leviticus 18:14)

### **Daughter in Law**

Like a daughter, a daughter in law cannot be married.

“Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter-in-law: she is ‘thy son' wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness”.

(Leviticus 18:15)

### **Sister-in-law (brother's wife)**

Marriage to a sister-in-law is prohibited in Judaism and is referred to be a brother's trust.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness’.

(Leviticus 18:16)

### **Sororal polygyny:**

It is forbidden to marry a woman's sister when she is already legitimately wed to a man.

“And thou shalt not take a woman to her sister, to be a rival to her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her lifetime”.

(Leviticus 18:18)

### **Marriage with non-Jew:**

Marriage is not allowed with a mother, sister, daughter, or non-Jew.

(Jewish Encyclopedia, p 1272)

In all the above mahrams (prohibited to marry), there is no prohibition on marrying a cousin-The word kinship is used in the religious literature of Judaism, it refers to the mahrams (prohibited to marry), which Islam has also declared as haram-

### **Cousin Marriage in Christianity:**

Christianity is the world's largest religion, guiding about 31% of the population. Christianity places a great value on monasticism. Christians elevate monasticism because Jesus did not wed. However, they accept the idea of marriage but arrange the wedding ceremony in their unique style.

"None of you shall approach to any that is near to kin to him to uncover their nakedness.

I am the LORD.

(Leviticus 18:16)

Catholic Church imposed a custom on the people that marrying cousins was evil and sinful, which became established in people's minds from time to time. There are many differences among Christians themselves in the determination of close relatives.

Shoaib,(page# 27)

First-cousin marriages were permitted in Roman Catholicism and the early days of Christianity, when Emperor Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, wed his children to those of his stepbrother. However, first and the Council of Ages banned second-cousin marriages in AD 506. In the 11th century, the ban was extended to a sixth-cousin wedding, but later, it became difficult to determine who was related to whom. It was restored to third cousins in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council. In 1917, Pope Benedict XV downgraded it to a second cousin, and it was finally enacted into the current law in 1983.

In 1913, the Catholic Encyclopedia described a theory by the Anglican bishop of Bath and Wells that Mary and Joseph, the mother of Jesus and her husband, were first cousins.

The Protestant Church allows cousin marriage, criticizing the Catholic system of division.

(Amy Strickland. "An Afternoon with Amy Strickland, JCL." *Cousin Couples*. 4 February 2001).

Anglican Communion allowed cousin marriage from The Anglican Communion from the beginning of the reign of King Henry VIII.

According to Luther and Calvin, the ban on cousin marriage was an expression of the Catholic Church rather than divine law.

[http://churchofcyprus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/KATASTATIKO\\_DIMOTIKI.pdf](http://churchofcyprus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/KATASTATIKO_DIMOTIKI.pdf)

Unlike both Protestants and Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox Church forbids second-cousin marriage. Bittles (May 2001). According to the Constitution of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus (2010), second-degree cousins can marry, as this restriction is only imposed on fifth-degree relatives.

[http://churchofcyprus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/KATASTATIKO\\_DIMOTIKI.pdf](http://churchofcyprus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/KATASTATIKO_DIMOTIKI.pdf)

If we study history, we will know that Christian kings and rulers have also married their close relatives and cousins. There is a long list, but we give a few examples.

Maria Antonietta wed Prince Alfonso, Count of Caserta, Ferdinand II of the Two Sicilies, who was her first cousin in 1868. Lundy (April 2008).

**Afonso I**, also known as Mvemba a Nzinga, was the first monarch of the Portuguese dynasty that ruled over Kongo, a former country in West-Central Africa. This dynasty lasted until the early 20th century. For his part in converting Kongo into a Christian kingdom, he is occasionally referred to as "The Apostle of Kongo." it is stated that he wed his cousin Isabella in 1447.

Anne, Deborah (2000). p. 70

In Christianity, cousin marriage is generally allowed and considered acceptable according to the teachings of most denominations. However, there are some restrictions in some cultures and countries, especially in the past laws were created to regulate or prohibit cousin marriage. These restrictions were based on social, cultural, and political reasons rather than religious beliefs. In general, the Catholic Church and most Protestant denominations do not have specific teaching forbidding cousin marriage but encourage couples to consider the possible genetic risks and other factors before deciding.

### Conclusion

- There is no restriction on cousin marriage in the light of Islamic teachings. One can marry the

- daughter of uncles, aunts, uncles, and aunts.
- There is no prohibition of cousin marriage in the religious orders of Judaism and Christianity.
  - In all three Semitic religions, there is the concept of unlawful relations (mahramat-nikah), and it is forbidden to marry those close relations, excluding cousins.
  - The practice of not marrying cousins has become common in Christianity, which has become firmly established in people's minds. There is no such commandment in the religious literature of Christianity.

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