

Abraham in the Koran - Muhammad is the call of Abraham

By

Dr. Mohsen El-Guindy

The Koran depicts Abraham as an outstanding figure. Abraham is called Ibrahîm in the Koran. Muslims see Abraham as the father of the Arab people as well as the Jewish people through his two sons, Ishmael (Isma'il in Arabic) and Isaak.

Abraham was born in a house of idolaters, in the kingdom of Babylon. The people at that time worshipped idols of stone and wood; others worshipped the planets, stars, sun and moon; still others worshipped their kings and rulers.

Abraham father's name was Azâr. Other traditions said that his father was named Azer. The name Azâr was confirmed by the Koran:

And when Abraham said to his father Azâr, 'Takest thou idols for gods? I see thee, and thy people, in manifest error.' (Al-An'am, 74).

Abraham's father was a well - known idol sculptor. As a young child, Abraham used to watch his father sculpting these idols from stones or wood. When his father was done with them, Abraham would use them as toys, riding on their backs, and kicking them at times. Then after a while, he would see these same statues in the temple, and people prostrating in front of them! Abraham asked his father: "Why do you take these toys to the temple?" His father said: "They are statues that represent our gods. We worship them, we ask favours from them, and we offer them presents." Abraham's mind rejected what he heard and he felt uneasiness and repulsion towards the idols. Abraham was only seven years old at that time.

Abraham was endowed with spiritual understanding from an early age. Allah enlightened his heart and mind, and gave him wisdom from childhood.

Abraham lived among his people, the Chaldeans, who had great knowledge of the stars and heavenly bodies. But he got beyond that physical world and saw the spiritual world behind. His ancestral idols

meant nothing to him; and Allah showed him with certitude the spiritual glories behind the magnificent powers and laws of the physical universe.

Allah says in the Koran:

So We were showing Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and earth, that he might be of those having sure faith (Al-An'am, 75).

Allah also says:

We gave Abraham a foretime his rectitude – for We knew him – when he said to his father and his people, 'What are these statues unto which you are cleaving?' (Al-Anbiya', 51).

So also did We show Abraham Our kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he might have certainty of faith (Al-An'am, 75).

Years have passed and Abraham grew to a young man. He could not understand how a sane person could make a statue and then worship what he had made. How then could people believe that such statues could harm or benefit them?

Abraham's people had a big temple full of idols, in the middle of which was a niche accommodating the biggest gods, which were of different kinds and shapes. Abraham who used to go to the temple with his father when he was a child greatly despised these idols made of stones and wood. What surprised him was the way his people behaved when they entered the temple; they bowed and started to cry, begging their gods for help as if the idols could hear and understand their requests.

At first, such a sight seemed funny to Abraham, but later he began to feel angry. Was it not astonishing that all those people could be deceived? What added to the problem was that his father Azâr wanted him to revere those statues, yet Abraham never stopped displaying his hatred and disdain of them.

One night Abraham walked alone in the dark until he chose a cave in a mountain and sat resting his back against its wall. He looked at the sky seeing the stars and planets, which were worshipped by some people on earth. He saw a star glittering in the vault of the sky. This, said he, 'is my god.' But when it set and disappeared he said, 'I do not like things that set, pass away, and cease to be.' Then when he saw the

moon rising into view, he said, 'This is my god.' But when it vanished from sight he said, 'Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the people who went astray.' But when he saw the sun rising he said, 'This is my god.' But when it set, he opened the eyes of his mind and said, 'O my people, I am indeed innocent of all that you join as partners in worship with Allah. Now I turn my face to Allah, the Eternal God, Creator of the heavens and the earth and I am not of those who incorporate with Him other deities.

We read in the Koran:

When night overspread over him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'I love not the setters.' When he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me I shall be surely of the people gone astray.' When he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater! But when it set he said, 'O my people, surely I am quit of that you associate. I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, a man of pure faith; I am not of the idolaters Al-An'am 76-79).

Abraham returned back to his people and disputed with them about the nature of Allah. In that debate, Abraham explained to his people that these idols and celestial bodies do not serve as deities and cannot be worshipped as partners with Allah the Almighty. Indeed these bodies are created things, fashioned, controlled, managed and made to serve. They appear sometimes and disappear at others, going out of sight from our world. However, Allah the Almighty does not lose sight of anything, and nothing can be hidden from Him. He is without end, everlasting without disappearance. There is no other deity but Allah.

Abraham made clear to them, first that the celestial bodies are unworthy of worship and second that they are among the signs of Allah.

Allah commanded in the Koran:

And from among His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them if you really worship Him. (Fussilat, 37).

Abraham's reasoning helped to reveal the truth, and then the conflict between him and his people began because the worshippers of the

idols, stars and planets did not stand mute, they began arguing and threatening Abraham.

The Koran narrates the debate of Abraham with his people:

His people disputed with him. He said, 'Do you dispute with me concerning Allah while He has guided me? I fear not what you associate with Him, except my Lord will aught. My Lord embraces all things in His knowledge; will you not remember? How should I fear what you have associated with Allah that whereon He has not sent down on you any authority. Which of the two parties has better title to security, if you have any knowledge? Those who believe, and have not confounded their belief with evildoing – to them belongs the true security; they are rightly guided. That is Our argument, which We bestowed upon Abraham as against his people. We raise up in degrees whom We will; surely thy Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing (Al-An'am, 80-83).

Abraham did his best to make his people heedful to the belief in the oneness of Almighty Allah and to the worship of Him alone. He bade them to firmly renounce the worship of idols. He said to his father and his people:

"What are these statutes unto which you are cleaving? They said. 'We found our fathers serving them.' He said, 'Then assuredly you and your fathers have been in manifest error.' They said, 'What, hast thou come to us with the truth, or art thou one of those that play?' He said, 'Nay, but your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth who originated them, and I am one of those that bear witness thereunto (Al-Anbiya', 52-56).

Abraham felt that it was his duty as a good son to advise his father against this evil so that he could be saved from Allah's punishment. He gently asked him why he worshipped lifeless idols who could not hear, see or protect him.

The Koran narrates:

And mention in the Book Abraham; surely he was a true man, a Prophet. When he said to his father, 'Father, why worshippeth thou that which neither hears nor sees, nor avails thee anything? Father, there has come to me knowledge such as not came to thee; so follow me, and I will guide thee on a level path. Father, serve not Satan; surely Satan is a rebel against the All-Merciful. Father, I feel that some

chastisement from the All-Merciful will smite thee, so that thou becomes a friend to Satan.' (Mayam 41-45).

His father responded angrily:

Said he, 'What, art thou shrinking from my gods, Abraham? Surely, if thou givest not over, I shall stone thee; so forsake me now for some while.' He (Abraham) said, 'Peace be upon thee! I will ask my Lord to forgive thee; surely, He is ever gracious to me. Now I will go apart from you and that you call upon, apart from Allah; I will call upon my Lord, and haply I shall not be, in calling upon my Lord, unprosperous (Maryam 46-48).

His father's harsh treatment did not stop Abraham from delivering the message of truth. Angry and sad to see people prostrate before idols, he was determined to stamp out these practices and went to the town to debate with the people knowing full well that he might suffer harm.

Abraham asked them: "Do the idols see you when you prostrate before them? Do they benefit you in any way?" They quickly tried to defend their beliefs. They argued that they knew the idols were lifeless but that their ancestors had worshipped them; to them this was proof enough for their belief. Abraham explained that their ancestors had been wrong. This angered them and they shouted: "Are you condemning our gods and our forefathers? Or are you just joking?"

Abraham showed no fear as he replied: "I am serious. I come to you with a true religion. I have been sent with guidance from our Lord Who alone is worthy of worship, Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and Who regulates all affairs of life, unlike the dumb idols which are just stone and wood."

To convince them that the idols could not harm him, he challenged: "I have already condemned them; if they had any power they would have harmed me by now!"

Allah recounted in the Koran:

And recite to them the tidings of Abraham when he said to his father and his people, 'What do you serve?' They said, 'We serve idols, and continue cleaving to them.' He said, 'Do they hear you when you call, or do they profit you, or harm?' They said, 'Nay, but we found our fathers so doing.' He said, 'And have you considered what you have been serving, you and your fathers, the elders? They are an enemy to me, except the Lord of all being who created me, and Himself guides

me, and Himself gives me to eat and drink, and, whenever I am sick, heals me, who makes me to die, then gives me life, and who I am eager to forgive me my offence on the Day of Doom (Al-Shu'ara 69-82).

In another chapter, we also read in the Koran what Abraham said to his people:

And Abraham when he said to his people, 'Serve Allah, and fear Him; that is better for you, did you know. You only serve, apart from Allah, idols and you create a calumny; those you serve, apart from Allah, have no power to provide for you. So seek after your provision with Allah, and serve Him, and be thankful to Him; unto Him you shall be returned (Al-Ankabut 16, 17).

And he said, 'You have only taken to yourselves idols, apart from Allah, as a mark of mutual love between you in the present life; then upon the Day of Resurrection you will deny one another, and you will curse one another, and your refuge will be the Fire, and you will have no helpers.' (Al-Ankabut, 25).

Once, it was the time of annual festival in the town and according to their custom, Nimrud, the King of Babylonia, went out of town with all his people to celebrate the day. Prophet Abraham did not accompany them but stayed behind. He went to the temple, approached one of the statues, and asked: "The food in front of you is getting cold, why don't you eat?" the statue kept silent. Abraham asked all the other statues around him: "Will you not eat of the offering before you? Why you not speak?"

The Koran says:

Then he turned to their gods (idols) and said, 'Will you not eat (of the offering before you)? What is the matter with you that you speak not?' (As-Saffat 91, 92).

Abraham was mocking them for he knew they would not eat or speak. Abraham then raised his axe and started smashing the false gods worshipped by the people. He destroyed them all except one on whose neck, he hung the axe. After this, his anger subsided and he felt at peace. He left the temple. He had fulfilled his vow to show his people a practical proof of their foolishness in worshipping something other than Allah.

When king Nimrud and his people returned, they were shocked to see their gods smashed to pieces, lying scattered all over the temple. They began to guess who had done that to their idols and Abraham's name came to their minds.

When Prophet Abraham was asked if it was he who broke the idols. He replied, "Why do you not ask the chief (of the idols) who is standing safe. Perhaps he has done it, that is if your idol gods can speak, ask them as to who broke them." Prophet Abraham did not utter a lie denying what he had done. He only wanted the people to first ask their own idols as to who had done it?

Allah says in the Koran:

They said, 'Who has done this with our gods? Surely he is one of the evildoers.' They said we heard a young man making mention of them, and he was called Abraham.' They said bring him before the people's eyes; haply they shall bear witness.' They said, 'So art thou the man who did this unto our gods, Abraham?' He said, 'No, it was the great one of them that did it. Question them, if they are able to speak!' (Al-Anbiya', 59-63).

The reasonable words of Abraham made them realize the senselessness of their beliefs; however, their arrogance would not allow them to admit their foolishness.

The Koran says:

So they returned one to another, and they said, 'Surely it is you who are the evildoers.' Then they were utterly put to confusion saying, 'Very well indeed thou knowest these do not speak.' He said, 'What, and do you serve, apart from Allah, that which profits you nothing, neither hurts you? Fie upon you and that you serve apart from Allah! Do you not understand?' (Al-Anbiya' 59-67).

All they could do was to use their power of authority as tyrants usually do to punish Abraham. They kept him in chains and planned their revenge.

Nimrud got very angry and asked his people their opinion. Every one suggested that Prophet Abraham be punished by burning alive in a big fire.

The Koran says:

But the only answer of his people was that they said, 'Slay him, or burn him!' (Al-Ankabut, 24).

Anger was burning in their hearts. They decided to throw Abraham into the biggest fire they could build. Abraham was jailed, while Nimrud ordered that all available firewood in the forest be collected and be heaped up in one open place. All the citizens were ordered to gather wood as a service to their gods.

When this was done, it was set alight. The fire burnt fiercely and widely for days and days. At the appointed day on which Abraham was to be put in the fire and burnt, Nimrud with his large army and followers came out to that place to watch. On seeing the huge fire and the intense heat, he began to ponder as to how it would be possible to convey Abraham into the fire. A type of a crane was prepared, which could be used to hurl Abraham into the fire. This would cut out the need of any assistance of human hands to do the risky job of delivering the Prophet into the raging fire.

The crane was constructed and Prophet Abraham was lifted and dumped into the fire.

Nimrud, the throng, the chiefs, and the priests sat watching the fire from a distance. It was burning their faces and nearly suffocating them. It kept burning for such a long time that the disbelievers thought it would never be extinguished.

The angel Gabriel came near Abraham's head and asked him: "O Abraham do you wish for anything?" Abraham replied: "Nothing from you. I seek help and protection from none but Allah, and Allah is fully aware of my situation and would help me if need be."

Then came the command from Allah, "O fire! Be nothing but coolness and peace for Abraham." Thus the burning fire instantly lost its heat and no harm came to Prophet Abraham.

The Koran reads:

We said, 'O fire, be coolness and safety for Abraham!' (Al-Anbiya', 69).

The fire submitted to the will of Allah, becoming cool and safe for Abraham. It only burned the ropes, which held him. Abraham sat in the

midst of the fire as if he were sitting in a garden glorifying and praising Allah.

The idolaters were greatly amazed to find Abraham coming out of the fire untouched. Their faces were black from the smoke, but his was bright with the light and grace of Allah. He walked out of the fire as if he were walking out of a garden.

The Koran says:

They desired to outwit him; so We made them the worse losers (Al-Anbiya', 70).

This miracle shamed the tyrants, but it did not cool the flame of anger in their hearts. After this event many of the people followed Abraham, although some kept their belief a secret for fear of harm or death at the hands of the ruler.

When the king, Nimrud saw Abraham coming safe out of the fire he feared that the status of godhead he had proclaimed for himself will be challenged by an ordinary human being. He summoned Abraham to the palace and held a dialogue with him, which Allah recounted in the Koran:

Hast thou regarded him who disputed with Abraham, concerning his Lord, that Allah had given him the kingship? When Abraham said, 'My Lord is He who gives life, and makes to die.' He said, 'I give life and make to die.' Said Abraham, 'Allah brings the sun from the east; so bring thou it from the west.' Then the unbeliever was confounded. Allah guides not the people of the evildoers (Al-baqara, 258).

Abraham's fame spread throughout the entire kingdom. People talked about how he had been saved from the blazing fire and how he had debated with the king and left him speechless. In the meantime, Abraham continued calling people to believe in Allah, exerting a great effort to guide his people to the right path. He tried every means to convince them. However, in spite of his love and care for his people, they felt angry and deserted him. Only one woman and one man of his people shared his belief in Allah. The woman's name was Sarah and she became his wife; the man's name was Lot, Abraham's niece, and he became a prophet.

Before leaving, Abraham tried once again to convert his father to Islam, but to no avail. Abraham said to his father and his people: "We

are free of you and of whatever you worship besides Allah. We have rejected you and there has arisen between us and you enmity and hatred forever unless you believe in Allah and Him alone."

The Koran narrates:

You have had a good example in Abraham, and those with him, when they said to their people, 'We are quit of you and that you serve, apart from Allah. We disbelieve in you, and between us and you enmity has shown itself, and hatred for ever, until you believe in Allah alone - except that Abraham said unto his father, 'Certainly I shall ask pardon for thee; but I have no power to do anything for you before Allah.' 'Our Lord, in Thee we trust; to Thee we turn; to Thee is the homecoming' (Al-Mumtahanah, 4).

Abraham, Lot and Sarah started their long travel. They crossed Babylon, went through Syria and Palestine calling people to Allah, helping the poor and doing good deeds. Abraham and Sarah wished to have children who would spread the Message of Allah after their death. As for Lot, he immigrated to the land of Sodom and settled there.

The Koran talks about Abraham's migration:

But Lot believed him; and he said, 'I will flee to my Lord; He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise (Al-Ankabut, 26).

After Palestine, Abraham travelled to Egypt, calling people to believe in Allah wherever he travelled, judging fairly between people, and guiding them to truth and righteousness.

Abu Hurairah narrated that Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions, twice for the sake of Allah when he excused himself by saying 'I am sick' to remain in the temple of idols to destroy them and not to accompany them to the pagan feast.

The Koran says:

And he said, 'Verily I am sick.' (As-Saffat).

And when he said, 'No, it was the great one of them that did it.' (Al-Anbiya', 63).

The third was that while Abraham and Sarah his wife were going on a journey to Egypt, they passed by the territory of a tyrant. Someone

said to the tyrant: "This man is accompanied by a very charming lady." SO, the tyrant sent for Abraham and asked him about Sarah. The tyrant asked Abraham, "Who is this lady?" Abraham said: "She is my sister." Abraham went to Sarah and said "O Sarah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and me. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister so do not contradict my statement." the tyrant then called Sarah, and when she went to him, he tried to take a hold of her with his hand, but his hand got stiff and he was confounded. He asked Sarah: "Pray to Allah for me and I shall not harm you." So Sarah asked Allah to cure him and he were cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but his hand got stiffer than before and he was more confounded. He again requested Sarah: "Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you." Sarah asked Allah to cure him again, and he became all right. He then called one of his guards who had brought her and said: "You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil." The tyrant then gave Hajar as a maid servant to Sarah. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked: "What has happened?" She replied: "Allah has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel and gave me Hajar for service." Abu Hurairah then addressed his listeners saying: "That Hajar was your mother, O Arabs the descendants of Ishmael, Hajar's son."

Abraham lived on earth worshipping Allah and calling people to Islamic monotheism. One day he begged Allah to show him how He brought the dead back to life. Allah commanded Abraham to take four birds, cut them up and mingle their body parts, divide them into four portions and place them on top of four different hills, then to call back the birds in Allah's name. Abraham did as he was told. Immediately the mingle parts separated to join their original bodies in different places and the birds flew back to Abraham.

Allah says in the Koran about this incidence:

And when Abraham said, 'my Lord, show me how Thou wilt give life to the dead,' He said, 'Why, dost thou not believe?' 'Yes,' he said, but that my heart be at rest.' Said He, 'Take four birds, and twist them to thee, then set a part of them on every hill, then summon them, and they will come to thee, running. And do thou know that Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise (Al-Baqara, 262) (1).

Abraham's wife Sarah was sterile. Time went by and no children were born to Sarah. Abraham is now an old man and it grieved Sarah to see Abraham's chance of having a boy slipping away. She offered Hajar

her servant as a wife to her husband, and prayed to Allah to bless Hajar and Abraham with a child.

Abraham asked Allah to grant him a righteous son. The Lord gave him the good news of a boy called Ishmael patient and forbearing.

The Koran says:

My Lord, give me one of the righteous. Then We gave him the good tidings of a prudent boy (As-Saffat 100, 101).

Hajar gave birth to her first son Ishmael (isma'il) when Abraham was 83 years-old of age.

And so came Ishmael, a baby boy born to Hajar. How unselfish Sarah was! For her, the need to have an offspring who would carry the Message after Abraham was greater than her pride. seventeen years later Allah rewarded Sarah with a son, Isaak in spite of her old age.

The story of Isaak's birth is mentioned in the Koran, but it is introduced by a reference to the people of Lot. Abraham now has taken his residence in Canaan, from which his nephew Lot (Lūt in Arabic), was called to preach to the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were also known as the 'cities of the plain' and were situated on the Jordan River plain in the southern region of the land of Canaan.

When Abraham was about one hundred years old, and his wife Sarah was not far short of ninety (Gen. xvii. 7), several very handsome young men visited Abraham's house. Considering them guests, he immediately arranged for their food. They were not human beings, but angels of Allah. They had come with the dual purpose of giving the good news of children to Abraham (Isaak, a son and Jacob, a grandson) and destroying Lot's community who had approached men lustfully instead of their lawful wives and had gone to the furthest extremes in their arrogance and rejection of the truth.

The Koran says about the people of Lot:

'See, you approach men lustfully instead of women; no, you are a people that do exceed.' (Al-A'raf, 81).

What, do you approach men lustfully instead of women? No, you are a people that are ignorant.' (Al-Naml, 55).

Abraham received the strangers with a salutation of peace, and immediately placed before them a sumptuous meal of roasted calf. The strangers were embarrassed. They were angels and did not eat. If hospitality is refused, it means that those who refuse it intend no good to the host. Abraham therefore conceived

a fear of them, but the strangers at once set him at rest by saying that their mission was in the first place to help Lot as a warner to the cities of plain. But in the second place they had good news for Abraham, he will have a son called Isaak and a grandson called Jacob.

Sarah was standing there, when she heard that she would bear a child she said, 'Dear me, shall I bear and give birth to a child in my age and my husband is an aged man! The angels said, 'Do you marvel at the divine command which has proceeded from Allah? Allah's mercy and blessing be upon you people of the House of prophet-hood.'

When fear had left Abraham, he began to show concern for the people of Lot, and was troubled on their account; pleading with Allah on their behalf for Abraham was forbearing, tender-hearted and oft-returning to Allah. But he was told, 'Abraham, cease your pleading, the command of your Lord has gone forth. There shall fall against them a punishment which none can avert.'

We read in the Koran:

Our Messengers came to Abraham with the good tidings; they said, 'Peace! 'Peace' he said.'; and presently he brought a roasted calf. And when he saw their hands not reaching towards it, he was suspicious of them and conceived a fear of them. They said, "Fear not; we have been sent to the people of Lot.' And his wife was standing by; she laughed, therefore We gave her the glad tidings of Isaak, and after Isaak, of Jacob.

She said, 'Woe is me! Shall I bear, being an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? This assuredly is a strange thing.'

They (the angels) said, 'What, dost thou marvel at Allah's command? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, O people of the House! Surely He is All-Laudable, All-Glorious.'

So, when the awe departed from Abraham and the good tidings came to him, he was disputing with Us concerning the people of Lot, Abraham was clement, compassionate, penitent.

'O Abraham, turn away from this; thy Lord's command has surely come, and there is coming upon them a chastisement not to be returned back (Hud 69-76).

Abraham woke up one day and asked Hajar to prepare herself and her baby Ishmael for a long travel. Abraham and Hajar kept walking, crossed a fertile land followed by barren mountains till they arrived at the Arabian desert. Abraham brought Hajar to a high hill called al-Marwa, made her and her baby sit under a tree, placed a bag of dates and some water near her, and set out homeward. Hajar ran after him and said: "Are you going to leave us in this desert where there is no one to keep us company?" She repeated this many times but he would not look back at her. She asked: "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said, 'yes.' 'Then He will not neglect us.' She said.

Abraham walked away until he got out of their sight, he raised his hands and prayed to Allah: "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley with no cultivation, by Your Sacred House, in order that they may offer prayers. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks."

The Koran says:

Our Lord, I have made some of my seed to dwell in a valley where is no sown land by Thy Holy House; Our Lord, let them perform the prayer, and make hearts of men yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; haply they will be thankful (Ibrahîm, 37).

Hajar went on nursing Ishmael and drinking from the water until it was all used up. She became very thirsty and the child was crying. She left him on the al-Marwa hill and hurried to the nearest hill, as-Safa. She stood there and started looking at the valley so that she might see somebody, but she could see none. She descended from as-Safa, crossed the valley running and reached al-Marwa hill. She stood and started looking but could see nobody. She kept running between as-Safa and al-Marwa seven times. When she reached al-Marwa for the last time, she was exhausted, she sat next to the baby. Then she heard a voice. She stood up and said: "O whoever you might be! Have you got something to help me?" She saw the angel, Jibreel (Gabriel), digging the earth until water flowed ! She built a little basin around it. She scooped water with her hands, drank, filled her water-skin, and nursed her baby. The place from which water flowed was Zamzam well. Muslims still until this day drink from the holy water of Zamzam, and during Hajj they walk between as-Safa and al-Marwa seven times to commemorate this event.

Some Arabs traveling through Makkah saw birds flying around al-Marwa, 'so it must have been water that attracted the birds; the birds must have been flying around water.' They said. When they arrived at the water, they found Hajar and asked her: "Would you allow us to stay with you, and use the water from your well?" She agreed and was pleased by their company. The people sent for their families, settled there and became permanent residents. The whole valley became alive. Ishmael grew up, learned Arabic, and later married a woman from amongst the Arabs.

Meanwhile, Abraham who had not seen his son since he was a baby came back to Makkah to visit him. Upon arriving, he heard that Hajar

had died, but Ishmael was still living there. Abraham was yearning to see his son whom he loved and missed a lot. He saw Ishmael under a tree near Zamzam, sharpening his arrows. When he saw his father, Ishmael rose up, hugged him and greeted him. It was the happiest moment for both father and son. But Allah wanted to put them to test, and it was a tough test indeed.

During one night, Abraham had a dream. He came to Ishmael and said: "O my son ! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you as a sacrifice to Allah, so what do you think?" Ishmael said without hesitation: 'Do what you are commanded, you shall find me very patient with Allah's will.'

The sacrifice in fact, was demanded of both Abraham and Ishmael. It was a trial of the will of the father and the son. They had both submitted to the will of Allah. Abraham laid his son prostrate, put his forehead on the ground and directed a sharp knife towards his neck. At this very moment, Allah called him: "O Abraham! You have fulfilled the dream! Thus do We reward the good doers !"

A big sheep was sent down from heaven to be slaughtered instead of Ishmael, which Abraham did, and they both had a big celebration that day. This event is celebrated every year by all Muslims in the big Eid al-Adha where Muslims slaughter a sacrificial sheep.

The Koran says about this event:

And when he had reached the age of running with him, he said, 'My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice thee; consider, what thinkest thou?' He said, 'My father, do as thou art bidden; thou shalt find me, God willing, one of the steadfast.' When they had surrendered, and he flung him upon his brow, We called unto him, 'Abraham, thou has confirmed the vision; even so We recompense the good-doers. This is indeed the manifest trial.' And We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice and We left for him a goodly remembrance among the later generations. Peace be upon Abraham. Even so We recompense the good-doers; he was among Our believing servants (As-Saffat, 102-111).

Abraham and Ishmael kept on calling people to worship Allah. At that time there was no place built for the worship of Allah. Abraham wished there could be such a place where people would be in peace, and concentrate solely on the worship of Allah. His wish was answered when Allah ordered him to build the Sacred House, the Ka'bah.

The Koran says:

And when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary, and: 'Take to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer.' And We made covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: 'Purify my House for those that shall go about it and those that cleave to it, to those who bow and prostrate themselves (Al-Baqara, 125).

Abraham said to Ishmael: "O Ishmael, Allah has given me an order, will you help me execute it?" "Yes I will." Ishmael said. "Allah has ordered me to build a house here." He said, pointing to a hillock higher than the land surrounding it. They went towards the place and started building the foundations of the Ka'ba. Ishmael brought the stones and Abraham built the walls, and when the walls became high, Ishmael brought a large stone and put it in front of his father who stood over it and carried on building, while Ishmael was handing him the stones. Both of them went on building and going around the Ka'ba, saying: "O our Lord accept this service from us."

When Abraham wanted to make a beginning for Tawaf (circling around the Ka'ba) like how angels circle around the House of worship in heaven, he looked for a brick or a stone from different colour to be placed in one of the sides of the Ka'ba, but he could not find one because all the stones in the valley were of the same colour. Allah sent Gabriel with a white stone from Paradise to be a sign, and thus he took it and placed it in its place, which is known now, and from that time people start circling around the Ka'ba from that point as the angels do around Al-bayt Al-Ma'moor (the Ka'ba of the angels in heaven). It is reported in a hadith "Every day 70000 angels make Tawaf around Al-bayt Al-Ma'moor and never return and when they leave another 70000 come." (Fath Al-bari 6/308).

The black stone was originally white in colour, but it turned black from outside because so many people touched it and kissed it.

When they finished the building, Angel Gabriel (Jibreel) descended from heaven and showed Abraham the rituals of Hajj. Then Abraham stepped on the stone and called on people: "O people obey your Lord." This large stone, which Abraham stepped on is still there to this day near the Ka'ba. It is called Maqam Abraham, meaning the station of Abraham.

One may ask: 'Who originally built the Ka'ba?' The Ka'ba is the earliest, most ancient House of worship on earth.

The Koran says:

The first House established for the people was that of Bakkah (an ancient name of makka), a place holy, and a guidance to all beings (Al-Imran, 95).

Most people think that the origin of the Ka'ba dates back to Abraham and his son Ishmael, but most are not aware that the Ka'ba is said to mirror the House of Allah in the heavens known as "Bait al-Ma'moor" around which angels worship Allah. Allah in His infinite Mercy ordained a similar place on earth and prophet Adam was the first to build this place. Angel Gabriel was sent by Allah to show Adam the place of the Ka'ba and help him building it. Abraham and his son Ishmael just uncovered the original foundations that had been obliterated by the great flood of Noah. Abraham and Ishmael erected the new Shrine on the same foundations.

The Koran says:

And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised up the foundations of the House: 'Our Lord, receive this from us; Thou art the All-hearing, the All-knowing (Al-Baqara, 127).

While erecting the foundations of the Ka'ba Abraham prayed to Allah: 'my Lord, make this city of peace, and provision its people with the kindly fruits of the earth, favouring those among them who believed in you and the Day of Judgment.' Allah answered, 'As for him who disbelieves, I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I shall compel him to the torment of the fire, and worst indeed is that destination.'

We read in the Koran:

And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this a land secure, and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day.' He said, 'And who so disbelieves, to him I shall give enjoyment a little, then I shall compel him to the chastisement of the Fire – how evil a homecoming (Al-Baqara, 126).

Because of his extreme loyalty to Allah, and his sincere obedience to His commands, Abraham was promised the leadership of the world; he

pleaded for a blessing on himself and progeny generally, both the children of his eldest born Ishmael and his younger son Isaak, and his prayer was granted, with the limitation that if his progeny was false to Allah, Allah's promise shall not reach the people who proved themselves false.

And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them. He said, 'behold, I make you a leader for the people.' Said he, 'And of my seed?' He said, 'My covenant shall not reach the evil doers (Al-Baqara, 124).

The rule that applied to Abraham applies to every generation: only those who prove themselves worthy will be granted a share in Allah's covenant; those who do not will meet the same fate as any other offenders in Allah's sight, regardless of the nation to which they belong.

After building the Ka'ba, Allah ordered Abraham to proclaim the pilgrimage among men. The Ka'ba is a place of worship for all without exception. It is a place to be pure without idols, the worship being paid to Allah, the One true God and universal without being reserved (like Solomon Temple of later times) to any one people or race. When the pilgrimage was proclaimed, people came to it from every quarter, near and far, on foot and mounted. The lean camel coming after a fatiguing journey through distant mountain roads typifies the difficulties of travel, which pilgrims disregard on account of the temporal and spiritual benefits.

In Hajj, there are material and spiritual benefits. Of the formal kind are social benefits like trade and increase in knowledge. Of the latter kind are the opportunities of realizing some of the spiritual yearnings in sacred associations that go back to the most ancient times. The gathering of Muslims in Hajj strengthens Muslims' brotherhood.

Allah says in His Noble Koran:

And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage, and they shall come unto thee on foot and upon every lean beast, they shall come from every deep ravine that they may witness things profitable for them and mention Allah's name on days well known over the cattle which he has provided for them (for sacrifice): 'So eat thereof, and feed the wretched poor. Then let them complete the rites prescribed, and let them fulfil their vows, and go about the Ancient House.' Such (is the pilgrimage); and whosoever venerates the sacred rites of Allah, it shall be better for

him with his Lord. Lawful to you (for food in pilgrimage) are cattle, except those mentioned to you (as exception). And eschew the abomination of idols, and eschew the speaking of falsehood, being men pure of faith unto Allah, not associating with him anything; for whosoever associated with Allah anything, it is as though he has fallen from heaven and the birds snatch him away, or the wind sweeps him headlong into a place far away (Al-Hajj 27-31).

Abraham therefore fulfilled Allah's commands: he surrendered to Allah's will when he ordered him to sacrifice his son Ishmael; he purified Allah's House; He built the sacred refuge of the ka'ba; he established the laws of pilgrimage and the rites for all Muslims as they perform the pilgrimage. He completely surrendered to Allah's will, and thus became the type of Islam.

Muslims perform the pilgrimage to pay homage at the Ka'ba, which Abraham had set up and reformed.

With prophetic vision Abraham foresees that there will be corruption and backsliding in both branches of his family: Makka will house 360 idols, Jerusalem will become a harlot city (Ezekiel xvi 15), a city of abomination. But the light of Islam will shine, and reclaim the lost people in both branches and indeed in all the world. So he prays for Allah's mercy, addressing Him as the Oft-Returning, Most-Merciful. And finally he foresees in Makka a Prophet teaching the people as one of their own, and in their own beautiful language, so he prays to Allah, 'And send in their midst O Allah our Creator, an Apostle from among them to recite to them your revelations and to teach them the Book and Wisdom and to impart sanctity to them.' He then asks for a blessing on Muhammad's ministry, appealing to the Power and Wisdom of Allah.

We read in the Koran:

And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised up the foundations of the House: 'Our lord, receive this from us; Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing; and, our Lord, make us submissive to Thee, and of our seed a nation submissive to Thee; and show us our holy rites and turn towards us; surely Thou turnest and art All-Compassionate; and, our Lord, do Thou send among them a Messenger, one of them, who shall recite to them Thy signs, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; Thou art the All-Mighty, the All-Wise (127-129).

Allah responded to the supplication of Abraham and conferred a great favour on the pagan Arabs when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves rehearsing unto them the signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while before that, they had been in manifest error.

Allah says in His noble Koran:

Truly Allah was gracious to the believers when He raised up among them a Messenger from themselves, to recite to them his signs and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom, though before they were in manifest error (Al-Imran, 164),

The advent of Muhammad is therefore due to the prayer and supplication of Abraham (2).

Allah then said:

'Who therefore shrinks from the religion of Abraham (Islamic monotheism) except he be foolish-minded? Indeed, We chose him in the present world, and in the world to come he shall be among the righteous. When his lord said to him, 'Surrender,' (i.e. be a Muslim), he said, 'I have surrendered me to the Lord of all Being (Al-Baqara, 130, 131).

And this submission to Allah (Islam) was enjoined by Abraham upon his sons as did his grandson Jacob at a later date; they both enjoined their sons the same dogma:

And Abraham charged his sons with this and Jacob likewise: 'My sons, Allah has chosen for you the religion; see that you die not save in the faith of Islam. Why, were you witnesses, when death came to Jacob? When he said to his sons, 'What will you serve after me?' They said, 'We will serve thy God and the God of thy fathers Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, One God; to Him we surrender (in Islam) (Al-Baqara 131, 132).

Allah showered Abraham with His blessings because he submitted himself fully to his Lord. He reserved his loyalty exclusively for Allah. He carried out his affairs in the world with justice and modesty, scrupulously avoiding injustice and arrogance. Man's face represents his whole personality. Turning one's face towards Allah means turning towards Him with one's whole existence. This is what Abraham did, and this is why Allah ordered Muslims to follow the way of Abraham

the true in faith. Because Abraham's conduct in life was firm and righteous in all circumstances, and was the fountainhead of the monotheistic tradition, and the patriarch of the prophetic line, Allah took him for a friend.

The Koran says:

And who is there that has a fairer religion than he who submits his will to Allah being a good-doer, and who follows the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith? And Allah took Abraham for a friend [Al-Nisa', 125].

Muslims consider Abraham the father of the prophets. From him descended all the prophets who came later, including Jesus and Muhammad. Abraham devoted all his life calling others to the True religion - Islam. Alone he stood against his people, his father, and even the mighty king of Babylon, and never flinched. Yet his method was always to gradually persuade them by bringing irrefutable proofs, that most often embarrassed those who refused to accept the Truth, but as Allah said: "Any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is none to guide !

Muslims believe that the prophet Abraham became the leader of the righteous in his time and it was through him that the people of both Arabia and Israel came. Abraham, in the belief of Islam, was instrumental in cleansing the world of idolatry in his time. Paganism was cleared out by Abraham in both Arabia and Canaan. He spiritually purified both places as well as physically sanctifying the houses of worship. Abraham and Ishmael further established the rites of pilgrimage or Hajj, which are still followed by Muslims today. Muslims maintain that Abraham further asked Allah to bless both the lines of his progeny, of Ishmael and Ishaq (Isaac), and to keep all of his descendants in the protection of Allah.

According to the Koran, Muslims are those who are the followers of the Prophet Abraham.

We read in the Koran:

Say: 'Allah has spoken the truth; therefore follow the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith and no idolater.' (Al-Imran, 95).

One Hadith describes how Abraham was commanded to build the Ka'ba with his son Ishmael:

'Then Abraham stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished and called on them afterwards. He saw Ishmael under a tree near Zamzam, sharpening his arrows. When he saw Abraham, he rose up to welcome him (and they greeted each other as a father does with his son, or a son does with his father). Abraham said, 'O Ishmael! Allah has given me an order.' Ishmael said, 'Do what your Lord has ordered you to do.' Abraham asked, 'Will you help me?' Ishmael said, 'I will help you.' Abraham said, 'Allah has ordered me to build a house here,' pointing to a small hill higher than the land surrounding it. The Prophet added, 'Then they raised the foundations of the House.' (3).

After Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the Ka'ba, Abraham was told to proclaim the pilgrimage to the sanctuary:

The first House established for the people was that of Bekka (an old name for Makka), a place holy, and a guidance to all beings. Therein are clear signs – the station of Abraham, and whosoever enters it is in security. It is the duty of all men towards Allah to come to the House a pilgrim, if he is able to make his way there. As for the unbeliever, Allah is All-Sufficient nor needs any being (Al-Imran 96, 97).

According to the Bible, Bakka is mentioned by prophet David in Psalms:

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." (Psalm 84:6).

The well here is the well known as Zamzam, still present now, close to the Ka'ba after thousands of years.

As long as they are able to do so, one of the five pillars of Islam requires every Muslim to perform the Hajj (pilgrimage) at least once in his or her lifetime. Multiple parts of the Hajj require pilgrims to make Tawaf, the circumambulation seven times around the Ka'ba in a counter-clockwise direction. This circumambulation is also performed by pilgrims during the Umrah (lesser pilgrimage). However, the most dramatic times are during the Hajj, when millions of pilgrims gather to circle the building on the same day.

Allah chose the Ka'ba as a source of unity for all the Muslims all over the world. The ka'ba is used as a focal point for prayer only, not as an object of worship. Muslims do not worship the Ka'ba nor any object. The God of the Muslims is the unseen, powerful, merciful God who created heavens and earth and sent the Messengers and Prophets

such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad peace be upon them all.

The koran refers to certain Scrolls of Abraham, which have alternatively been translated as the Books of Abraham. All Muslim scholars have generally agreed that no scrolls of Abraham survive, and therefore this is a reference to a lost body of scripture. The Scrolls of Abraham are understood by Muslims to refer to certain revelations Abraham received, which he would have then transmitted to writing. The exact contents of the revelation are not described in the Koran.

There are verses in the Koran however, indicating some of what was included in the old Scriptures of Abraham and Moses:

Therefore remind, if the Reminder profits, and he who fears shall remember, but the most wretched shall flout it, even he who shall roast in the Great Fire, then he shall neither die therein, nor live.

Prosperous is he who has cleansed himself, and mentions the name of His Lord, and prays. Nay, but you prefer the present life; and the world to come is better, and more enduring.

Surely this is in the ancient scrolls, the scrolls of Abraham and Moses (Al-A'la 9-19).

In another chapter of the Koran, some more subject matters of the earlier scriptures of Abraham and Moses are mentioned:

Or has he not been told of what is in the scroll of Moses, and Abraham, he who paid his debt in full? That no soul laden bears the load of another, and that a man shall have to his account only as he has laboured, and that his labouring shall surely be seen, then he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense, and that the final end is unto thy Lord, and that it is He who makes to laugh, and that makes to weep, and that it is He who makes to die, and that makes to live, and that He Himself created the two kinds, male and female, of a sperm-drop, when it was cast forth, and that upon Him rests the second growth, and that it is He who gives wealth and riches, and that it is He who is the Lord of Sirius, and that He destroyed Ad, the ancient, and Thamood, and He did not spare them, and the people of Noah before – certainly they did exceeding evil, and were insolent – and the subverted City He also overthrew, so that there covered it that which covered. Then which of thy Lord's bounties disputest thou?

This is a warner, of the warners of old. The Hour that was to come draws ever nearer; apart from Allah none can disclose it. Do you then marvel at this discourse, and do you laugh, and do you not weep, while you make merry? So bow yourselves before Allah, and serve Him (An-Najm 36-62).

Prophet Abraham built the Ka'ba for devout worship to the only God, Allah. But within his lifetime people disobeyed his orders and began to put idols inside the Ka'ba. Abraham had to clean the Ka'ba of these idols and of the worshippers. He told the people that the Ka'ba was a symbolic House of Allah and it must be respected. People did not understand this logic and after the death of Abraham, the people filled the place with idols again. They thronged to the Ka'ba annually and worshipped their personal gods. It was over four thousand years later that Muhammad, the last of the line of prophets entered Makka triumphantly, went inside the Ka'ba, and destroyed all the idols with his own hands. At one stage of this destruction of idols, the tallest of the idol Hubbal was brought down after Ali, the Prophet's cousin, had to stand on the shoulders of the prophet to carry out Allah's commands. During the demolishing of the idols, the Prophet was reciting the verse from the Holy Koran: 'Truth has come and falsehood has vanished.' The ka'ba plays an important role in a Muslim spiritual life. It became the Qibla towards which a Muslim should be facing when he prays to his Lord. Muslims all praying towards the ka'ba is considered to symbolize the unity of all Muslims worldwide under Allah's Law.

The Qibla has importance beyond prayer. The head of an animal that is slaughtered using halal methods is aligned with the Qibla. After death, Muslims are buried with their heads turned right towards the direction of the Qibla.

Muslims Qibla originally faced the Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem for over 13 years while the Prophet was preaching Islam in Makka. Seventeen months after his arrival to Madina, the Qibla became oriented towards the Ka'ba in Makka. The change happened very suddenly during the noon prayer in Madina, in a mosque now known as Masjid al-Qiblatain (Mosque of the Two Qiblas). Muhammad was leading the prayer when he received revelations from Allah instructing him to take the Ka'ba as the Qibla. Muhammad immediately turned around to face Makka, and those praying behind him also did so.

Before the coming of Islam people had prayed towards Jerusalem. This old Qibla had come to be thought of as sacred and inviolable. In the second year after the Prophet's emigration to Madina, he was commanded to alter the direction of prayer and face Makka instead of Jerusalem. The hypocrites, the idolaters and the Jews of Madina found this change difficult to accept. They said, 'How could another place be the Qibla when Jerusalem had held this position for time immemorial?' The opponents of Islam used the change of the Qibla as an excuse to spread all sorts of rumours about the Prophet. 'Previous prophets have always faced Jerusalem in their prayer,' they said. 'How is it that this Prophet has gone against them? This goes to show that the only purpose of his mission is to spite the Jews.' Some poured scorn on Muhammad's claim to prophet-hood. 'He seems to be in two minds about his own mission,' they said. 'Sometimes he faces Jerusalem, sometimes Makka.' Others said, 'Well, if the Ka'ba in makka is the real Qibla, then all prayers which Muslims have made facing towards Jerusalem have been wasted.'

We read in the Koran:

The fools among the people will say, 'What has turned them from the direction they were facing in their prayers aforetime?' Say, 'To Allah belongs the East and the West; He guides whomsoever He will to a straight path (Al-Baqara, 142).

The commandment of changing the Qibla from Jerusalem to al-Ka'ba is indicated in the next two verses:

We have seen thee turning thy face about in the heaven; now We will surely turn thee for a direction that shall satisfy thee. Turn thy face towards the Holy Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it. Those who have been given the Book know it is the truth from their Lord; Allah is not heedless of the things they do (Al-Baqarah, 144).

From whatever place thou issueth, turn thy face towards the Holy mosque; and wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it, that the people may not have any argument against you, excepting the evil-

doers of them; and fear you them not, but fear you Me; and that I may perfect My blessing upon you, and haply so you may be guided (Al-Baqara, 150).

True believers did not let the change of the Qibla disturb them. They realized it is not the direction of prayer that really mattered, but Allah's commandment. Allah can change the Qibla as He pleases, for in whichever direction one turns, one faces Him. Whatever Allah prescribed should be followed.

The Koran says:

To Allah belong the East and the West; so wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah; Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing (Al-Baqara, 115).

The change of qibla was not due only to the objection of the Jews and the idolaters and the hypocrites of Madina, but it was also a test to the true believers and those who were not sincere. Allah wanted to test the strength of their faith.

The Koran says:

Thus We appointed you a midmost nation that you might be witnesses to the people, and that the Messenger might be a witness to you; and We did not appoint the direction thou wast facing, except that We might know who followed the Messenger from him who turned on his heels – though it were a grave thing save for those whom Allah has guided; but Allah would never have your faith to waste – truly, Allah is All-Gentle with the people, All-Compassionate (Al-Baqara, 143).

As we said before, the direction of the Ka'ba is not important by itself, but what important is to be god-fearing and a devout servant to Allah.

Allah says in the Koran:

It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, the angels, the

Book, and the Prophets, to give of one's substance, however cherished. To kinsmen, and orphans, the needy, the traveller, beggars, and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfil their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, and endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril, these are they who are true in their faith, these are truly god-fearing (Al-Baqara, 177).

No doubt, there are other reasons also for this change which we find from the history of Islam and from a study of the conditions then prevailing in the Peninsula, for example:

- 1- The Ka'bah, which had been constructed by Prophet Abraham, was respected by the entire Arab society. To declare such a place the 'qibla' ensured satisfaction of the Arabs in general and attracted them towards Islam. And there could be no target sublime than the obstinate polytheists who were far behind the caravan of civilization should embrace the true faith, and Islam should spread through them in all parts of the world.
- 2- There was no hope that the Jews of those days would embrace Islam, and it therefore appeared necessary that the Muslims should remain at a distance from them, because they indulged in obstructionist activities and wasted the time of the Prophet by putting forward knotty questions, whereby, according to their own thinking, they displayed their knowledge and wisdom. Change of qibla was one of the manifestations of seeking distance from the Jews.

The Ka'ba was established at last as a direction for Muslims in prayer, thus going back to the earliest centre, with which the name of Abraham was connected, and traditionally also the name of Adam. Jerusalem still remained and remains sacred in the eyes of Islam on account of its past, but Islam is a progressive religion, and its new symbolism enabled it to shake off the tradition of a dead past and usher in the era of untrammelled freedom dear to the spirit of Arabia.

To end this part of the Qibla, I borrow the words of Abdullah Yusuf Ali:

“But those people who have passed away, who promised to uphold the Law of Allah (Jews and Christians), their progeny having been found unworthy, their place was taken by a new people looking towards Makka – a new people, with a new Messenger, to bear witness to Allah’s Law, to proclaim the truth, maintain His symbols, and strive and fight for unity in Allah’s way.”

After all, Islam, which is superior to other religions in all respects, should manifest itself in such a way that the points of its perfection and superiority should become absolutely clear. Several Prophets preached Islam before Abraham (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Hud, Salih). Father Abraham is mentioned in the Koran as the great ancestor of those among whom Islam was first preached.

Allah says in the Noble Koran:

‘Peace be upon Noah among all beings!’ Even so We recompense the good-doers; he was among Our believing servants. Then afterwards We drowned the rest. Of his party was also Abraham; (As-Saffat, 83).

Allah has instructed Muslims to strive in His cause as they ought to strive. He has chosen them, and has imposed no difficulties on them in religion. The Jews were hampered by many restrictions, and their religion was racial. Christianity, as originally preached, was a hermit religion: “Sell whatsoever thou hast” (Mark x. 21): “Take no thought for the morrow” (Matt vi. 34).

Allah is the One who named the believers ‘Muslims’, both before Muhammad and also in his time, that the Messenger be a witness for Muslims, and Muslims be witnesses for mankind. Muhammad is a witness for Muslims in the sense that he sincerely delivered the Message of Islamic monotheism to them. The Muslims being witnesses for mankind means that they delivered in turn the Message of Islam after Muhammad to all people.

Allah says in the Koran:

And struggle for Allah as is His due, for He has chosen you, and has laid on you no impediment in your religion, being the creed of your father Abraham; He named you Muslims a foretime and in this, that the Messenger might be a witness against you, and that you might be witnesses against mankind. So perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and hold you fast to Allah; He is your Protector -- an excellent Protector, an excellent Helper (Al-Hajj, 78).

Allah said to the believers (Muslims) in the Koran:

Say you: 'We believe in Allah, and in that which has been sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaak and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender (Al-Baqara, 136).

The above verse shows clearly that Allah has only one religion and that is Islam. All Prophets brought to their people the religion of Islam – Allah is One, and no deity is to be worshipped but Allah.

The above verse also shows the creed of Islam: (1) to believe in the One universal God, Allah. The concept of the Trinity is considered as blasphemous; (2) the Message of Islam is interpreted on the basis of personal responsibility – each individual is responsible for his own deeds. The concept of vicarious atonement is completely rejected; (3) believing in the Messages delivered by all the Prophets of the past because they all brought the same Message of Islam. The creed of Islam was taught by Messengers and Prophets that could be categorized in three groups: (a) Abraham, Ishmael, Isaak, Jacob and the Tribes: of these Abraham had apparently a Book (Lxxxvii. 19) and the others followed his tradition: (b) Moses and Jesus who each left a Scripture; these Scriptures are still extant though not in their pristine form; and (c) other Scriptures, Prophets or Messengers of Allah not specifically mentioned in the Koran (Ghafir, 78). Muslims make no differences between any of these. Their Message in essentials was one, and that is Islam.

Muslims are thus in the true line of those who follow the one, and indivisible message of the One God, Allah, wherever delivered. If others narrow it or corrupt it, it is they who have left the faith and created a division or schism (2).

In other words, the Message taught by Prophet Muhammad was exactly the same as had been taught by Abraham. But those people of the Book (Jews and Christians), who prided themselves on being followers of Abraham, led the opposition against the Prophet. The reason was that the religion the Prophet taught, and which Abraham had taught before him, was the religion of Islam. Now, Islam means total submission to Allah, and it was this religion that Abraham handed down to his offspring. But the religion that the people of the Book practised had nothing to do with the total submission to Allah. Having lapsed into permissiveness, and unwilling to change this lifestyle, they had allowed their religion to degenerate into a series of hollow rituals, which they fondly believed would make it easy for them to enter Paradise.

In the religion that Prophet Muhammad taught, however, one could gain salvation only by virtue of one's actions. The people of the Book, for their part, thought that their affiliation to a nation of saints and Prophets would be sufficient to earn them redemption. There was a world of difference then between Islam, the true religion of Abraham, and the religion that the people of the Book practised and attributed to him.

True religion means acceptance of divine guidance, as revealed to man through the Prophets, whereas the religion practised by the people of the Book was based on their own national legacy, a collection of traditions, which had accumulated over generations (4).

Now, non-Muslims have no excuse before Allah on the Day of Resurrection that no revelation came to them, and that they were heedless of Islam, which means - Allah is One, and no deity is to be worshipped but Allah.

The Koran says:

And when it is said to them, 'Come now to what Allah has sent down, and the Messenger, they say, 'Enough for us is what we found our fathers doing.' What, even if their fathers had knowledge of naught and were not guided? (Al-Maidah, 104).

As the Prophet is a guide and exemplar among Muslims, so Muslims ought to be exemplars amongst mankind. The best witnesses to Allah's Truth are those who show its light in their lives. Therefore, they must say their prayers regularly, and pay the alms, and hold fast to Allah (3).

The earlier generations of the prophets are grouped into three epochs from a spiritual point of view: (1) from Adam to Noah, (2) from Noah to Abraham, and (3) from Abraham to an indefinite time, say to the time when the Message of Allah was corrupted and the need arose for the final Messenger of Unity and Truth, Muhammad peace be upon him.

These are they whom Allah has blessed among the Prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those We bore with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, and of those We guided and chose. When the signs of the All-merciful were recited to them, they fell down prostrate, weeping (Maryam, 58).

In the Koran Allah reprimanded the Jews and the Christians why do they contend with opposing argument about Abraham whether he was a Jew or Christian when they know that both the Torah and the Gospel were revealed long after his time. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but he was a Muslim of pure faith and never did he incorporate with Allah other deities. Indeed those who best deserve a rightful claim to Abraham are those who followed him, and the Prophet Muhammad and the believers in Islam.

People of the Book why do you dispute concerning Abraham? The Torah was not sent down, neither the Gospel, but after him. What, have you no reason? No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but was a Muslim and one pure of faith; certainly he was

never of the idolaters. Surely the people standing closest to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who believe; and Allah is the protector of the believers (Al-Imran 65, 67, 68).

Abu Hurairah, the Prophet's companion, narrated that the Prophet said, 'Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by offering the prayers in the mornings, afternoons and during the last hours of the nights (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol.1, Hadith No. 38).

Who was the sacrifice Ishmael or Isaak?

The Jews and the Christians claim that Abraham sacrificed Isaak to his Lord and not Ishmael. There is no better than what the eminent Islamic scholar Dr Jamal Badawi wrote in this subject. The following is his explanation.

The following quotes are taken from the Bible.

The Bible Genesis 22:2

"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, _____, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains".

The Bible Genesis 22:12

"Since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

The important question is who was this only son of Abraham that was offered for sacrifice? Ishmael the eldest son or Isaac the second son? The Bible writers have placed the name of Isaac in the blank space above. Muslims believe Ishmael was around thirteen years old when Abraham was asked to sacrifice him. In both the above quotations the Lord uses the word your only son. Obviously, the logical answer is that the incident must have taken place before the birth of Isaac, the second son of Abraham. So, what could be the reason that the name of Isaac appears in the blank space, as the only son of Abraham?

Bible scholars explain that anomaly by putting forward the following two arguments.

The first argument is that after the birth of Isaac, Ishmael lost his status of being a son of Abraham, since he was not born of a wife of Abraham but born to a handmaid of Abraham's wife. However, this argument is false because Hagar was a wife of Abraham otherwise the Lord would not have used the word wife in the following verse.

Genesis 16:3 So after Abraham had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

Moreover, Jews and Christians contend that only Isaac, the one that was born to Sarai was a son. However the biblical passage below tells us that Ishmael never lost his status as a son, not even after the birth of Isaac. If Ishmael had lost the status, the Lord would not have used the word sons in the following verse.

Genesis 25:9 Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael, buried him (Abraham) in the cave of Machpelah.

A second argument presented is that because Ishmael was born to a handmaid he would qualify as a seed or a descendant of Abraham, but not as a son. This argument is nullified because prevailing Nuzi Laws of marriage (exhibit A) tell us that such marriage contracts were legal in the days of Abraham and the child born of a handmaid or slave-girl would have the same status as one born to the wife, even if the wife had a child of her own later.

There can be no doubt concerning the validity of the Nuzi laws of marriage. For example, when one traces the maternal side of the children of Israel, Genesis tells us that Jacob (later called Israel Gen 32:28) had four wives. He married Leah (Gen 29:22-23), Rachel (Gen 29:28), a slave-girl Bilhah (Gen 30:4), and another slave-girl Zilpah (Gen 30:9). From these four wives came the twelve Children of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Gen 35:23-26 & 1 Chronicles 2:1-2). All twelve of these children make up the Israelites and are all referred as a combined group, see (Exodus 1:1-9). Four of the twelve children (Gad, Dan, Naphtali and Asher) were sons of the slave-girls. Thus, it follows that about one third of all Israelis are children of slave-girls! Will a third of all Jews stand up and say they are illegitimate? Moreover, further evidence that the Bible clearly includes

the slave-children as part of the combined group of Israelis is the Bible's tracking of their genealogy in (1 Chronicles 5:18; 1 Chronicles 7:12, 13, 30).

Moreover, we are told that the children of Asher were leading princes. 1 Chronicles 7:40 "All these were descendants of Asher, heads of families, picked men of ability, leading princes."

Consequently, the entire Abrahamic family tree is tracked in 1 Chronicles, including Abraham's children from his first wife Hagar (1 Chronicles 1:29), his second wife Sarah (1 Chronicles 1:34) and his third wife Keturah (1 Chronicles 1:32 - see family tree at main web page). Moreover, there is a very similar incident in the Bible (Ruth 1-4). In this story, a child born to a handmaid is indeed recognized as a son. For example, Boaz, a landowner of Bethlehem, meets a handmaid named Ruth (Ruth 3:9) and marries her. Ruth was a young widow and a handmaid of Moabite descent (Ruth 1:4); the Moabite people were descendants of an act of incest by Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19:36-37). Boaz and Ruth latter had a son named Obed. Later on, Obed became the founder of the royal line of Israel (Ruth 4:17-22), an ancestor of both king David and of the great prophet Jesus. If the son of a maidservant of questionable heritage could have the honour of being the progenitor and forbearer of the most important lines of descent for both Jews and Christians, then why cannot Ishmael, a son of a handmaid, be offered by his father for a burnt offering as his only son? Moreover, this argument cannot be correct because if it were, Sarah would have never said. (Gen 16:2) The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her. Abraham agreed. It is certain that Sarah and Abraham knew the law and did not want to waste their time during their old age building an illegitimate family that would serve them no good!

So, is it out of tribal rivalry that the descendants of Isaac (Jews) are concealing these facts and depriving the pre-eminence due to the descendants of Ishmael (Arabs)?

In Encyclopaedia Judaica Jerusalem, volume 9, under the heading Ishmael it is written:

"It is related that a renowned traditionalist of Jewish origin, from Qurayza tribe and another Jewish scholar who converted to Islam, told Caliph Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz (717-20) that the Jews were well informed

that Ismail (Ishmael) was the one who was bound (sacrificed), but they concealed this out of jealousy."

Even the Bible admits how Jews tampered with scripture.

(Jeremiah 8:8 RSV) How can you say, We are wise, we have the law of the LORD, when scribes with their lying pens have falsified it?

The Quran confirms that Abraham did indeed relocate Ishmael & Hagar and that because of Abraham's strong faith and willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael, God rewarded him with the birth of Isaac:

The Quran 37:102-111

And when he attained to working with him, he said: O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: O my father! Do what you are commanded, if God please, you will find me of the patient ones. So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, and we called out to him saying: O Abraham! You have indeed shown the truth of the vision; surely thus do we reward the doers of good: Most surely this is a manifest trial. And we ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And we perpetuated (praise) to him among the later generations. Peace be on Abraham. Thus do we reward the doers of good. Surely he was one of our believing servants. And we gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet among the good ones.

The Quran 14:35-37

And when Ibrahim said: My Lord! Make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols: My Lord! Surely they have led many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, Though surely art Forgiving, Merciful: O Our Lord! Surely, I have settled a part of my family in a valley without cultivation by thy sacred house; in order, O lord, that they may establish prayer: So fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with fruits: So they may give thanks.

THE NUZI LAWS OF MARRIAGE

Jacob M. Myers of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania has been a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary and a contributor to Interpreter's

Dictionary of the Bible. He is recognized as a leading expert on the Old Testament. In his book Invitation to The Old Testament he writes:

"Archaeological discoveries help us to fill in the details of the biblical narrative and to explain many of the otherwise obscure references and strange customs that were commonplace in Abraham's world and time. A Nuzi marriage contract provides that a childless wife may take a woman of the country and marry her to her husband to obtain progeny. But she may not drive out the offspring even if she later has children of her own. The child born of the handmaid has the same status as the one born to the wife. That is why, when Sarah wanted to drive out Hagar and Ishmael, it was quite objectionable to Abraham because of the legal custom of the region from which he came, he was reluctant to do so. It required special divine dispensation to act contrary to that custom." (5).

Gen 21: 12-13 And God said to Abraham, 'Do not be disturbed over the lad and your handmaid. Listen to Sarah and do everything she tells you.'

The above quoted Nuzi Law of marriage confirms that a child born of a handmaid wife to a childless father has the same status as one born to his wife and cannot be treated differently, even after the birth of a child to his original wife.

Based on the above analysis it is obvious that in no uncertain terms beyond a shadow of a doubt that the bible was manipulated to EXCLUDE Abraham's other son Ishmael. The preponderance of the evidence proves that Ishmael and Isaac were both blessed and part of God's covenant. (6).

Muhammad is not only the prophesy of Abraham but also the prophesy of Moses and Jesus. The Jews and the Christians argue that this is not true and offered several false claims that do not quench the thirst of sincere researchers.

1- Muhammad is the prophesy of Moses

The Biblical prophecies on the advent of the Prophet Muhammad are evidence of the truth of Islam for people who believe in the Bible.

In Deuteronomy 18, Moses stated that God told him: "I will raise up for them a

prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

From these verses we conclude that the prophet in this prophecy must have the following three characteristics:

- 1) That he will be like Moses.
- 2) That he will come from the brothers of the Israelites, i.e. the Ishmaelites.
- 3) That God will put His words into the mouth of this prophet and that he will declare what God commands him.

Let us examine these three characteristics in more depth:

- 1- A prophet like Moses: There were hardly any two prophets who were so much alike as Moses and Muhammad . Both were given a comprehensive law and code of life. Both encountered their enemies and were victorious in miraculous ways. Both were accepted as prophets and political leaders. Both migrated following conspiracies to assassinate them. Analogies between Moses and Jesus overlook not only the above similarities but other crucial ones as well. These include the natural birth, the family life, and death of Moses and Muhammad but not of Jesus. Moreover Jesus was regarded by his followers as the Son of God and not exclusively as a prophet of God, as Moses and Muhammad were and as Muslims believe Jesus was.

Therefore, this prophecy refers to the Prophet Muhammad and not to Jesus, because Muhammad is more like Moses than Jesus.

- 2- Also, one notices from the Gospel of John that the Jews were waiting for the fulfilment of three distinct prophecies. The first was the coming of Christ. The second was the coming of Elijah. The third was the coming of the Prophet. This is obvious from the three questions that were posed to John the Baptist: “Now this was John’s testimony, when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He

did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." (John 1:19-21). If we look in a Bible with cross-references, we will find in the marginal notes where the words "the Prophet" occur in John 1:21, that these words refer to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18:18.2. We conclude from this that Jesus Christ is not the prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:18.

- 3- Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 21). Ishmael became the grandfather of the Arab nation, and Isaac became the grandfather of the Jewish nation. The prophet spoken of was not to come from among the Jews themselves, but from among their brothers, i.e. the Ishmaelites. Muhammad, a descendant of Ishmael, is indeed this prophet. Also, Isaiah 42:1-13 speaks of the servant of God, His "chosen one" and "Messenger" who will bring down a law. "He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." (Isaiah 42:4). Verse 11, connects that awaited one with the descendants of Kedar. Who is Kedar? According to Genesis 25:13, Kedar was the second son of Ishmael, the ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 4- God will put His words in the mouth of this prophet: The words of God (the Holy Quran) were truly put into Muhammad's mouth. God sent the Angel Gabriel to teach Muhammad the exact words of God (the Holy Quran) and asked him to dictate them to the people as he heard them. The words are therefore not his own. They did not come from his own thoughts, but were put into his mouth by the Angel Gabriel. During the life time of Muhammad, and under his supervision, these words were then memorized and written by his companions.

Also, this prophecy in Deuteronomy mentioned that this prophet will speak the words of God in the name of God. If we looked to the Holy Quran, we will find that all its chapters, except Chapter

9, are preceded or begin with the phrase, "In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

- 5- Another indication (other than the prophecy in Deuteronomy) is that Isaiah ties the messenger connected with Kedar with a new song (a scripture in a new language) to be sung to the Lord (Isaiah 42:10-11). This is mentioned more clearly in the prophecy of Isaiah: "and another tongue, will he speak to this people" (Isaiah 28:11 KJV). Another related point, is that the Quran was revealed in sections over a span of twenty-three years. It is interesting to compare this with Isaiah 28 which speaks of the same thing, "For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there." (Isaiah 28:10).

Note that God has said in the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18, "If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account." (Deuteronomy, 18:19). This means that whoever believes in the Bible must believe in what this prophet says, and this prophet is the Prophet Muhammad.

- 6- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is mentioned by name in the Song of Solomon chapter 5 verse 16:

"Hikko Mamittakim we kullo Muhammadim Zehdoodeh wa Zehraee Bayna Jerusalem."

"His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." In the Hebrew language im is added for respect. Similarly, im is added after the name of Prophet Muhammad to make it Muhammadim. In English translation, they translated the name of Prophet Muhammad as "altogether lovely", but in the Old Testament in Hebrew, the name of Prophet Muhammad is yet present.

Prophet Muhammad is the prophecy of Jesus

The Koran narrates that Jesus prophesied the coming of Muhammad.

"And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said, 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the

Law (which came) before me and giving glad tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmed.' But when he came to them with clear signs, they said, 'This is evident sorcery!' " (As-Saff, 6).

But when Muhammad actually appeared, both the Jews and the Christians rejected him. They were such transgressors that they were not ready to accept even plain realities. When Muhammad came, he showed forth many clear signs, for his whole life right from the beginning to end was one vast miracle. He fought and won against odds. Without learning from men, he taught the highest wisdom. He melted hearts that were hard, and he strengthened hearts that were tender, and required support. In all his sayings and doings men of discernment could see the working of Allah's hand; yet the ignorant unbelievers called it all sorcery! – called that unreal, this unreal became the most solid fact of human history (3).

1. John chapter 14 verse 16:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."

2. Gospel of John chapter 15 verse 26:

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

3. Gospel of John chapter 16 verse 7:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you".

"Ahmed" or "Muhammad" meaning "the one who praises" or "the praised one" is almost the translation of the Greek word *Periclytos*. In the Gospel of John 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7. The word 'Comforter' is used in the English translation for the Greek word *Paracletos* which means advocate or a kind friend rather than a comforter.

Paracletos is the warped reading for *Periclytos*. Jesus (pbuh) actually prophesied Ahmed by name. Even the Greek word *Paraclete* refers to the Prophet who is a mercy for all creatures.

Some Christians say that the Comforter mentioned in these prophecies refers to the Holy Spirit. They fail to realize that the prophecy clearly says that only if Jesus departs will the Comforter come. The Bible states that the

Holy Spirit was already present on earth before and during the time of Jesus, in the womb of Elizabeth, and again when Jesus was being baptised, etc. Hence this prophecy refers to none other than Prophet Muhammad.

4. Gospel of John chapter 16 verse 12-14

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you unto all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me".

The Spirit of Truth, spoken about in this prophecy refers to none other than Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

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