



Paran and The Promised Prophet

By

Muhammad Ashraf Chheenah

I. S. R. C.

**Interfaith Study and Research Centre
Satrah Meel, Murree Road
Islamabad-Pakistan
www.isrcpk.com**

Copyright © 2020: Muhammad Ashraf Chheenah,
INTERFAITH STUDY AND RESEARCH CENTRE (I. S. R. C.)
Satrah meel, Murree Road Islamabad-Pakistan.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles.

Chheenah, Muhammad Ashraf

Paran and the Promised Prophet ﷺ

SATRAH MEEL, MURREE ROAD ISLAMABAD-PAKISTAN: I. S. R. C. 2020

Pages:

Publisher: **I. S. R. C.**, Satrah meel, Murree Road, Islamabad-Pakistan.

Printer: Shirkat Printing Press, Nisbat Rd. Lahore.

Title: Haroon Rasheed

1st Edition: 2020

ISBN:

Copies: 1,000

Price: Pakistan Rs. 1500/-; Overseas US \$ 25/-; £ 18/-

Available Muhammad Ashraf Chheenah., I. S. R. C., SATRAH MEEL,
(In Pakistan): MURREE ROAD, ISLAMABAD-PAKISTAN

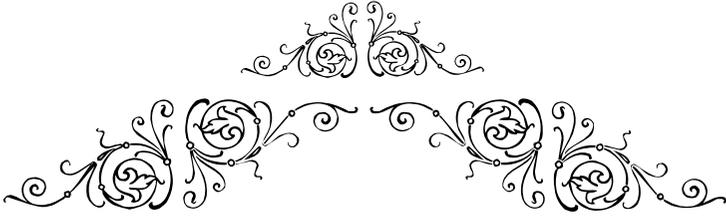
Cel. (0092) 03015241813,

Land Line: 092512807012,13,

Email: isrcpk@gmail.com

Web: www.isrcpk.com

All ISRC publications can be downloaded from the web address given above.



Dedication

This work is dedicated to

The Almighty Allah

The All-Compassionate, The All-Merciful



By the Same Author:

Hagar the Princess, 2012 (2nd Ed. 2016).

Israelites Versus Other Nations, 2012.

Slavery and Human Rights Through the Ages 2 Volumes (2017)

Islam as Emancipator of Women 2 Volumes (2019)

Original Sin and Salvation (2020)

The New World Order

Forthcoming Books:

God Creation and Guidance

CONTENTS

Contents	V
Acknowledgments	VII
Abbreviations	VIII
Preface	XI
Ch. 1 –	13
Wilderness of Paran	13
The Search for Truth	13
Exodus: the Traditional Route	15
▪ <i>An Alternate Route of the Exodus</i>	15
Exaggerated Number of Israelites	16
Controversy about the Desert of Wandering	20
Hagar and Ishmael in Wilderness of Paran	21
Ch. 2 –	23
Paran as per the Holy Bible	23
(1) Location of Shur	27
(2) The Location of Havilah	28
b) Havilah – in North Central Arabia	28
c) Havilah – in Arabia and Africa	29
d) Havilah; East of Egypt on the way to Assyria	33
Syed Abul-Ala-Muadudi’s Visit to Sinai	34
Visit of the Researchers, as per a Website	35
Location of Sinai	35
Major C. S. Jarvis	37
Ch. 3 –	41
History of Ishmaeli Tribes	41
The Wilderness and the Well	48
The Lawgiver	49
Who were the Writers of the Pentateuch	51
Vitality and Impact of the Study	55
References on Paran	56
What has been Concealed and Why?	57
Prophecies of Jacob and Moses Fulfilled	59
Other Scriptural Prophecies Fulfilled	61
THE SCEPTER	66
Ch. 4 –	73
Prayer Prophecy and Fulfillment	73
Abraham’s Devotion to Allah	73
Blessings on Abraham in the Genesis	75
Fulfillment of the blessings	75
Israelites were the First to be Put to Test	89

Ch. 5 –	91
Prayers of Abraham as Per the Qur’an	91
The Greatest Prayer of Abraham	95
Prophecy of Jacob	98
Prophecies of Moses	101
Warning against the Pagan Practices	104
The Promise to Send a Prophet	105
Ch. 6 –	113
A Prophet Like Moses	113
Background of the Prophecy	113
Muhammad the Prophet Like Moses	114
Similarities between Moses and Muhammad	115
Warning for Disobedience to the Prophet	123
Acid Test of the Prophet	124
Final Blessings of Moses	127
1-a. The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them	127
1-b The Fig, the Olive, and Sinai	129
2. He shined forth from Mount Paran	131
3. He came with 10 thousand saints	132
4. From his right hand went a fiery law for them	134
Ch. 7 –	137
The Teachings and Prophecies of Isaiah	137
Absolute Oneness of God	147
God is One and Unique	148
God the Savior, the Redeemer, and the Forgiver of Sins	149
The Foretold Messenger had to Establish the Kingdom of God	150
Jeremiah and the Covenant	155
Worship of Idols	158
People rejected the Word of the Lord	164
The New Covenant	167
Vision of Prophet Habakkuk	188
Worship of New Gods	191
Divine Guidance and the Prophecy	207
Ch – 8	211
The Promised Prophet	211
1. Brethren of Israel	213
2. The Prophet will be like Moses	213
Abraham	216
The Blessings of Abraham	216
The Prophet like Moses	217
Index	219
Bibliography	221

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely indebted to Almighty Allah for granting me the fortitude to finish this assignment in spite of multiplicity of ailments including the eyesight problems. I am also grateful to my wife and my sons for providing me the comfortable atmosphere and all that they could do to assist me in the matter. I frankly admit that without co-operation of all the members of my family, it would not have been possible for me to present this book to the readers. I am also grateful to Mr. Zafar Iqbal of Samundari to procure certain books relevant to the discussion and for his valuable advice to improve the treatise.

I must also thank Mr. Hafiz Haroon Rasheed for his most valuable help to produce various reference books from my own collection or from the internet besides inserting relevant verses from the Qur'an and the Bible without loss of time. May God bless him and all persons mentioned above with long, healthy and prosperous lives on Earth and with generous rewards in the Hereafter.

Muhammad Ashraf Chheenah,
Chairman,
ISRC, Islamabad, 2020.

ABBREVIATIONS

AD/CE	anno domini (Latin), in the year of the Lord, Common/ Christian Era.
Ar	Arab, Arabia, Arabian, Arabic.
B	Bible.
BC	Before Christ; Bible Commentary; Biblical Commentary.
BCE	Before Christian/Common Era.
c/ca	About, approximately (Latin circa)
CE	Common Era: secular form of AD.
Ch	Chapter.
DB	Dictionary of the Bible.
Ed	Editor, edited by, edition.
Edn	Edition.
e.g./eg	for example (Latin exempli gratia).
Enc	Encyclopedia/Encyclopaedia/Encyclopedic.
Heb	Hebrew.
i.e.	that is, that means, namely.
MT/Mt	Massoretic /Masoretic Text of the OT; Matthew; Mount.
NT	New Testament of the Bible Contains 27 books: 4 Gospels, Acts, Epistles (letters), and lastly Revelations. It was originally written in Greek, whereas Jesus Christ delivered his message in the Aramaic language.
op.cit.	in the work already quoted (Latin opere citato).
OT	Old Testament of the Bible Consists of 39 books: The first five are collectively called the Pentateuch or Torah. It was originally written in Heb.
ﷺ عليه وسلم	(pbAh) peace and blessings of Allah upon him.
p/pp	Page/pages.
P	Priestly tradition of the OT of the Bible.
Pbl/pbg	Publisher(s) Publication(s) /Publishing/.
Rvd	Revised.
St	Saint.
s.v.	Under the word or heading.
Tr.	Translator, translation, translated by.
Uni./Univ.	University.
v/vv	Verse/verses of the Bible.
V	Version (Tr.) of the Bible.
Vol.	Volume.
(...)	It indicates that some word, words, sentence, sentences, line, or lines have been left over from the original quotation.
(....)	It shows that a sizeable text has been omitted from the original quotation.
[]	The square brackets are used to insert something by the Tr./Ed., which did not originally exist in the quotation.
AV/KJV	Authorized Version/King James Version.
CCB	The Christian Community Bible (Manila: Divine Word Pbln, 1988).
CEV	Contemporary English Version (NY: American Bible Society, 1995).
GNB/TEV	Good News Bible/ Today's English Version -do-.
GNB:REV	Good News Bible (Revised Edn), Minto: The B. Society in Australia Inc. NSW.
LB	The Living Bible (Illinois: Tyndale House Pblshrs. 1976)
MT	The Torah, The Mesoretic Text (Jewish Pbln. Society of America).
NAB	New American Bible, Catholic Bible Association, 1991.

NASB	The New American Standard Bible, Cambridge Univ. Press 1977.
NEB	The New English Bible, Oxford Univ. Press, 1985.
NIV	New international Version, London, 1984.
NJB	The New Jerusalem Bible, Standard Edn, Bombay: St. Paul's, 1993.
NKJV	New King James Version.
NLTr.	New Living Translation, 1996:
NOAB.	The New Oxf. Annotated B:
NRSV.	New Revised Standard Version:
RSV.	Revised Standard Version.
RBV	Revised Berkeley Version:
Peshitta	The Authorised B. of the Church of the East, 1957.
Knox	Ronald A.Knox, Tr. From the Vulgate, Macmillan & Co. 1957

Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible

1. The Jewish Bible/OT

Abbreviation:	Book:	Abbreviation:	Book:
Amos or Am	Amos	Judg. or Jgs	Judges
1 Chron. or 1 Chr	1 Chronicles	1 Kings or 1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Chron. or 2 Chr	2 Chronicles	2 Kings or 2 Kgs	2 Kings
Dan. or Dn	Daniel	Lam. or Lam	Lamentations
Deut. or Dt	Deuteronomy	Lev. or Lv	Leviticus
Eccles. or Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Mal. or Mal	Malachi
Esther or Est	Esther	Mic. or Mi	Micah
Exod. or Ex	Exodus	Nah. or Na	Nahum
Ezek. or Ez	Ezekiel	Neh. or Neh	Nehemiah
Ezra or Ezr	Ezra	Num. or Nm	Numbers
Gen. or Gn	Genesis	Obad. or Ob	Obadiah
Hab. or Hb	Habakkuk	Prov. or Prv	Proverbs
Hag. or Hg	Haggai	Ps. (pl.Pss.) or	Psalms
Hosea or Hos	Hosea	Ps (pl. Pss)	
Isa. or Is	Isaiah	Ruth or Ru	Ruth
Jer. or Jer	Jeremiah	1 Sam. or 1 Sm	1 Samuel
Job or Jb	Job	2 Sam. or 2 Sm	2 Samuel
Joel or Jl	Joel	Song of Sol. or	Song of Solomon (=Song of Songs)
Jon. or Jon	Jonah	Sg	
Josh. or Jo	Joshua	Zech. or Zec	Zechariah
		Zeph. or Zep	Zephaniah

2. The New Testament

Abbreviation:	Book:	Abbreviation:	Book:
Acts	Acts of the Apostles	Luke or Lk	Luke
Apoc.	Apocalypse (=Revelation)	Mark or Mk	Mark
Col. or Col	Colossians	Matt. or Mt	Matthew
1 Cor. or 1 Cor	1 Corinthians	1 Pet. or 1 Pt	1 Peter
2 Cor. or 2 Cor	2 Corinthians	2 Pet. or 2 Pt	2 Peter
Eph. or Eph	Ephesians	Philem. or Phlm	Philemon
Gal. or Gal	Galatians	Phil. or Phil	Philippians
Heb. or Heb	Hebrews	Rev. or Rv	Revelation (=Apocalypse)
James or Jas	James	Rom. or Rom	Romans
John or Jn	John (Gospel)	1Thess. or 1Thes	1 Thessalonians
1 John or 1 Jn	1 John (Epistle)	2Thess. or 2Thes	2 Thessalonians
2 John or 2 Jn	2 John (Epistle)	1 Tim. or 1 Tm	1 Timothy
3 John or 3 Jn	3 John (Epistle)	2 Tim. or 2 Tm	2 Timothy
Jude	Jude	Titus or Ti	Titus

PREFACE

WILDERNESS OF PARAN

The Search for Truth

Paran or wilderness of Paran has been mentioned about 11 times in the Bible and there is also frequent mention of the term in the Islamic literature. The expositors of the Bible suggest the location of wilderness of Paran in the Sinai Peninsula. Most of their descriptions refer to the wilderness lying between Beersheba and the Sinai Mountains while on the western side, it extends to Shur as mentioned by the Bible. The western parts of the modern Jordan and areas south of the Dead Sea on both sides of the Gulf of Aqaba seem to be included in Paran. We shall discuss the same in detail subsequently.

The Islamic traditions, however, suggest a different location as compared with its description in the Bible. Paran of the Arabs, perhaps, starts from Araba and covers the entire Hejaz province of Saudi Arabia including parts of Jordan adjoining the Saudi Kingdom. Thus, the valley, the wilderness including the range of mountains from Yemen to Petra and south from there to Midian and all the lands on the south-eastern side of the Red Sea are included in Paran. The center of Paran (Faran) is Makkah with the holy sanctuary (i.e Kaabah) known to be the first and the most ancient house of the Lord (Almighty Allah) on Earth.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rightly said that "الصدق ينجي والكذب يهلك", "it is only the truth that saves and it is falsehood that destroys". We can, therefore, conclude that nothing but truth can lead the human beings to permanent success or welfare in this world as well as in the life hereafter. Falsehood misleads the people and misdirects them from the path leading to the attainment of their ultimate wellbeing. It is, therefore, necessary that one should free himself from the presupposed notions and prejudices, and love the truth for the sake of truth. The seekers of truth cannot, therefore, depend on one sided story of any single culture or community, and must start a search for truth objectively. To appreciate the truth, however, it is necessary that one must evaluate all the

facts in their true perspective with a naked eye and without using the colored glasses to get at reality.

We must appreciate the truth by taking into view all the ground facts as well as the history of the region in its true perspective laying aside the colored glasses and evaluate the relevant evidence objectively. We are constrained to say so because the Jewish scholarship of the old has been intentionally camouflaging the truth and confusing the true meanings of certain most important revelations in the Holy Book, just to serve their self interest and to promote the cause of Israel. The advent of the promised prophet in Arabia was, perhaps, the most important fulfillment of the prophecies in the Old Testament which was not acceptable to the Jews as well as the Christians. They, therefore, continue to make earnest efforts to confuse the location of Paran. Such efforts, however, mislead their readers who rely on the integrity of the expositors as fair and honest interpreters of the events. Such concealment of facts has already deprived a major part of humanity of receiving the true guidance from the Lord through His final revelation in the Qur'an. The burden for misleading the innocent readers falls, therefore, on those Jewish and Christians scholars who have concealed or twisted the revelations and the relevant prophecies in the Bible in order to prevent people from the right path and from following the law as per final commandments of the Lord.

So far as Paran is concerned, the Jews seem to have concealed the truth intentionally to confuse the meaning of certain most important revelations in the Holy Book. Besides confusing the place of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Arabia, the Israelites as well as the Christians also deny the settlement of Ishmaelites at Makkah. Anyhow, it is the law of nature that ultimately the truth must prevail over the falsehood and last forever. The Qur'an has exquisitely asserted that

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

And say: The truth has come and the falsehood has vanished; surely falsehood is a vanishing (thing). (Al Quran: 17:81)

It is a fit time, therefore, to establish the truth and to obliterate the untruth about Paran spread by age long propaganda of certain writers of the West. We, therefore,

hope that an honest and independent appraisal of the material facts exposing the other side of the picture may be helpful to the unbiased and impartial readers for a well founded and balanced judgment in the matter. This may help the true seeker of truth to adopt the path for their righteous conduct in life and salvation in the Hereafter.

As regards Paran, the misconception is so deep-rooted in the Jewish/Christian minds as well as in their literature that they are not even prepared to hear anything against their pre-established notions. Facts are, however, facts whether people acknowledge the same or not.

Exodus: the Traditional Route

▪ **An Alternate Route of the Exodus**

A good number of scholars are of the opinion that the Israelites started from Raamasas and went to Sukkoth and most probably crossed the lake Timsa to enter Sinai. Thereafter, taking the eastern side of the bitter lake, the hosts had, perhaps, gone up to the place of the present Suez port on the Gulf of Suez. From there they moved southwards along the bank of Red Sea and stayed a short while at Ayune-Musa and then moved to Abu-Zanima, Wadi Feiran, Feiran Oasis and Jabali-Musa. There is another suggestion that from Ayune-Musa, the Israelites went to Serabit-el-Khadim and from there to Jabali-Musa. Whatever the route up to the holy mountain, it is agreed that after staying about a year near the mountain of law giving, the Israelites moved to the wilderness of Paran on way to Canaan and stayed a long time at Kadesh Barnea. The Israelites thereafter had forty years of continuous wandering in the so-called wilderness of Paran. They fought with the Amalekites and others and continued moving throughout the wilderness **but failed to come across even single Ishmaelites in the region**. No evidence or traces of Ishmaelites having ever lived in the Sinai Peninsula could be found by 2 million Israelites during their forty-year wanderings in the region. This is a conclusive proof that Hagar and Ishmael or their descendants never stayed in the wilderness of Paran being part of the Sinai Peninsula. It is, therefore, obvious that the Israelites have

been wandering in Badiet-et-Tih, meaning the desert of wanderings which lay in the Sinai Peninsula, and the writers of the Bible, having very limited Geographic knowledge of the area extending beyond the Gulf of Aqaba, confused the term Paran with Badiet-et-Tih, as we shall discuss in detail later on the subject.

Exaggerated Number of Israelites

The Bible tells us that the total number of direct descendents of Jacob family who went to Egypt was 70 (Gen. 46:27). About 300 or 400 years later, during the Exodus, a census was taken at Mount Sinai, and the total number of men of 20 years old or older fit for military service was found to be 6,03,550, excluding the tribe of Levi (Num. 1:50). Let us estimate the number of Levites at a minimum of 46,450. Thus, the total number of men fit for military service comes to about 6,50,000 persons. It can also be presumed that the number of women, children, and the old persons, not fit for military service, must be four times the figure given above. As such, the total population of the Israelites in the wilderness comes to $6,50,000 \times 4 = 25,80,000$; or say more than 2.5 million persons. The number of camels, donkeys, sheep, and goats could possibly be at least double of the number of human beings. One, therefore, wonders how the parched wilderness in Sinai could provide the feed and water for the livestock aide from 2.5 million Israelites.

We also know that there had been no sources of water, except the one at Beersheba, south of Canaan; and another at Ain Gathriat, further to the south from Beersheba towards the Sinai mountains. There had been no water worth the name in between the aforesaid locations. Even otherwise, the combined sources of water at Beersheba and Ain Gathriat were insufficient to meet the requirements of such a large crowd. Under the circumstances, we cannot believe that the so-called wilderness of Paran could provide enough water and pasturage to sustain millions of animals in addition to men for a continuous period of about 40 years. Even if the human beings were provided with miraculous supply of 'Mann and Salwa', one finds no solution for food and water for the livestock. There has been no miracle of pasturage for millions of animals in the wilderness. **How such a large number of human beings**

and the animals were kept alive in the desert, is an enigma for the scholars unable to find any solution to the same. One is, therefore, led to believe that the number of Israelites, as mentioned in the Exodus, are exaggerated beyond any proportion, and the same has no relevance to the facts.

We have cogent reasons to believe that at no time in the human history, the afore-stated wilderness of the wanderings could afford to accommodate millions of men and cattle, even for a few days. Neither the climate was hospitable nor there was enough vegetation to meet the needs of millions of men and animals. This was perhaps the main reason that no settlements, worth the name, could ever be found in the wilderness. The bare minimum population in Sinai was found on the periphery of the Peninsula, while the central region was almost a mere wilderness without any population worth the name. The Badia-ut-Tih or Wilderness of wandering suggested by the Exodus was hardly one third of the Sinai Peninsula.

For a comparative study, we find that in 1917, when the Britishers took over the control of Palestine from the Turks, the whole population of Palestine did not exceed seven hundred thousand persons. (*Palestine and the Bible*, p. 109, by Samuel Shore, The Studd Press, London, 1950). It is also interesting to note that prior to year 1931 Major C.S. Jarvis, the then Governor of Sinai, had estimated that the **entire Sinai Peninsula was populated only by twenty five thousand nomads**. Since the alleged wilderness of wandering (Paran or Badia-ut-Tih) is about 1/3 of the entire Sinai Peninsula, and parched wilderness, therefore, hardly 3 to 4 thousand nomads might have been living in the area identified as wilderness of Paran by the Genesis. Mr. Verner Keller, also arrives at a similar conclusion:-

“Today at a rough estimate 5,000 to 7,000 nomads live with their flocks on the Sinai peninsula. Israel must, therefore, have been about 6,000 strong since the battle with the Amalekites appears to have been indecisive.” (p 131 *The Bible As History*, Bantam Books 1982)

In view of the above, we cannot believe that the same area could have accommodated 2.5 million Israelites along with about 5 million animals for 40 years during the time of the

Exodus. It is, therefore, more plausible to presume **that the Israelites were only in thousands and not in millions when they came out of Egypt.**

Further it may be noted that during their extensive search of the region for about 40 years, the Israelites did not come across a single settlement of the Ishmaelites during their 40 years wandering in the so-called Wilderness of Paran. It is worth-noting that due to the marriage of Ishmael about 142 years earlier than the marriage of Jacob (Israel), the multiplication from the 12 sons of Ishmael had started much earlier than the Israelites started multiplying from the 12 sons of Jacob. During the said lapse of time, the Ishmaelites might have been four generations ahead of the Israelites. If each generation redoubled against the previous one then **the Ishmaelites might have been sixteen times the number of the Israelites.** Even if they had not grown so fast, they still might have far exceeded the total strength of the Israelites till the time of the Exodus. In any case, the much larger number of the Ishmaelites as compared with the Israelites would not have allowed the Israelites to intrude into the so-called Paran of the Genesis. If, therefore, the assertion about the abode of Hagar and Ishmael in Paran is taken as correct, there was no possibility of their remaining hidden from the Israelites. Nothing could have concealed the great nation (Gen 17:20) promised by the Lord. Since the Israelites did not come across any Ishmaelite in the Sinai Peninsula, therefore, Paran described as the dwelling place of Hagar and Ishmael must be some other place which did not fall in Sinai.

Since the composers of the Genesis had started recording the events about 1000 years after Abraham, therefore, they did not have any reliable information about the same. Before the exodus, they had remained under slavery with the Egyptians for about 400 years, who kept them under slave drivers who were hard task masters. During the said period, the Israelites had no chance to visit outside their settlements in the area of Goshen. They, therefore, were extremely ignorant about different geographical locations around Egypt and even subsequently around the Sinai Peninsula. After the death of Joshua i.e. during the period of the Judges, the Israelites hardly had any respite to look beyond the lands occupied by them. They had the first gasp of relief only during the later part of the reign of King David

extending up to the death of King Solomon. This was the first opportunity for them to have self-realization of security, prosperity and power in Palestine. During the said period, the Israelites started asserting about their greatness, holiness and the proud privilege of being descendants of Abraham. They started propagating themselves as the sons of God and the only people of the Lord. Most of the mythological compositions depicting the ancestors of the Israelites as great heroes are the products of the said period. To get rid of their inferiority complex, they also tried to denigrate all nations having rivalry with them.

From the afore-stated background of the Israelites, it transpires that the composers of the Genesis had no knowledge of the region beyond their own borders. There is no evidence that the Israelites ever visited the Sinai Peninsula after the exodus till the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in about 586 B.C. Factually, the Israelites never cared to retrace their steps towards Sinai or to locate the Mount Sinai till about 300 A.D. It fell to the lot of St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, the Great, that she identified Jabal-e-Musa as Mount of the Covenant in about 325 A.D.

They also lacked any reliable information about the place where Hagar and Ishmael were living after their separation from the family. It was, therefore, due to some conjectures that they described location of Paran within the Sinai Peninsula without ever visiting the area to have first hand knowledge about the region. To them, it extended from Beersheba to Mount Sinai and from Araba to Shur. They had no idea that Paran extended from Yemen to the Gulf of Aqaba and from there to Petra of the Old. All lands from Midian to Yemen on the south eastern bank of the Red Sea was the wilderness of Paran, as we shall discuss subsequently. For the Israelites, however, it started from Beersheba and remained confined within the Sinai Peninsula.

In view of this, we believe that the Biblical reference pertaining to Ishmaelites living in Paran, was neither based

on some revelation nor proper knowledge about geographical location of Paran. Factually, Ishmael being the first born of Abraham belonged to God and due to his dedication to the Lord, Abraham separated him from his family along with his mother during his suckling period to stand before the house of the Lord at Makkah. As such, the Paran as dwelling place of Hagar and Ishmael was not in the Sinai Peninsula but it was Makkah, the true Paran of the Arabs. It was, therefore, the same Paran of the ancient times where the Ishmaelites have been living ever since the time of Abraham till the advent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) at Makkah. It comprises the same area which we know as the Hijaz province of Saudi Arabia today.

Besides the possibility of the lack of knowledge, it is also possible that the composers of the Genesis might have intentionally distorted the established facts of History to distract the laymen among the Israelites and others from locating the true place of the advent of the Promised Prophet in Paran as foretold by Moses. (Deu.18:14-20 and 33:2)

Controversy about the Desert of Wandering

In the Bible, we find another mention of Paran as a small city, which the National Geographic Atlas of the World shows almost on straight line from Elat to As-Safi and Sodom towards the Dead Sea. This Paran is almost equidistant from Elat and As.Safi. The aforesaid Paran, too, is a small dwelling place and cannot be considered the wilderness of Paran of the Bible.



Hagar and Ishmael in Wilderness of Paran

For further examination of verses 20-21 of Genesis 21 stating that Ishmael and Hagar lived in the wilderness of Paran and that his mother found an Egyptian wife for him, **we find that Hagar and Ishmael neither visited Egypt nor did Ishmael marry an Egyptian girl.** The statement in the Bible to this respect is against the established history of the Arabs and there is not a single evidence to support the Biblical statement. Had Ishmael and Hagar or their descendents ever lived in Egypt or the so-called Desert of Paran, the Israelites should have confronted them somewhere or at least found their traces during their long stay in the areas. We, therefore, conclude that the story of Hagar and Ishmael living in the wilderness of Paran or the marriage of Ishmael with an Egyptian girl has been fabricated by the writers of the Genesis from their self conceit rather than any material evidence to support the same.

The Genesis tells us that Isaac was born when Ishmael was already 14 years of age, and at the weaning of Isaac he was between 17 to 19 years. The Islamic traditions tell us that the mother of Ishmael died at Mecca when Ishmael was 15 years old. Soon after the death of his mother, Ishmael married a girl named Amara Bint Saeed Bin Usama Bin Aqeel of the family of Amaliq. Subsequently on a hint from his father, Ishmael divorced his aforesaid wife and

married Syeda Bint Midad bin Umar, the chief of Banu Jurham, a famous tribe of Arabia, who was then ruling over the Makkah region. (*Tareekh-e-Islam* i.e. History of Islam, by Muhammad Akbar Shah Najeeb Abadi, p. 59)

The Bible as well as Islamic history confirms that Ishmael became father of 12 princes. On the other hand, Isaac married at the age of 40 years and Jacob and Esau were born to him when he was 60 years. We further learn that Jacob married at the age of 84 years, and he, too, had 12 sons from his different wives i.e. about $(60 + 84) = 144$ years later than the 12 sons of Ishmael. This shows that Ishmaelites had started to multiply about 144 years earlier than the procreation of Israelites from the 12 sons of Jacob. Ishmaelites were, therefore, about four generations ahead of the Israelites, and if and re-doubling after every 36 years, the number of the Ishmaelites might have. The group of Ishmaelites travelling from Jilaad to Egypt with their camels loaded with spices and resins (Gen. 37:25) is, perhaps, the first recorded group of traders in the history of the world. It, therefore, transpires from the above that by the time the Israelites were just shepherds grazing their animals in Canaan, the Ishmaelites were masters of the ancient trade routes and held most of the inhabited areas in Arabia. This also shows that Ishmaelites were coming from Arabia and not from Sinai or the so-called Desert of Paran in Sinai Peninsula. Anyhow, no Ishmaelites were found living in the Sinai Peninsula even during the repeated visits of brothers of Yusuf (Josef) to fetch corn from Egypt or at the time when the entire family left Canaan for Egypt along with Jacob (Israel).

PARAN AS PER THE HOLY BIBLE

We find the first mention of Paran in the Genesis when the angel of the Lord addresses Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, in the following words:

And **God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water;** and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And **God was with the lad; and he grew,** and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And **he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran:** and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt. (Gen 21:19-21 KJV)

From the narration in the Genesis, it transpires that Hagar saw **a well of water in Beersheba**, when she wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba (Gen. 21:14-15). This was almost half a day's journey from Gerar, where Abraham dwelt for some time when "Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah" (Gen. 20:2 KJV).

Now, if we believe the afore-stated narration as correct, then the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael would serve no purpose at all, because Ishmael and Hagar would be next door to the abode of Sarah and Abraham; and they could turn back anytime to claim their rightful inheritance during the life of Abraham or after his death. We understand that the main purpose of Sarah was to deprive Ishmael from succeeding in the government and to ward off any risk of injuries to Isaac at the hands of Ishmael, as narrated by Josephus in the following words:

3. As for Sarah, she at first loved Ismael, who was born of her own handmaid Hagar, with an affection not inferior to that of her own son, **for he was brought up in order to succeed in the government;** but when she herself had borne Isaac, she was not willing that Ismael should be brought up with him, as being too old for him, and able to do him injuries when their father should be dead; she therefore persuaded Abraham **to send him and his mother to some distant country.** (p. 42)

It is evident from the above that Sarah allegedly persuaded Abraham to send Ishmael and his mother to some distant country to prevent the apprehensions stated in the Gen. 21:10 and also in the assertion of Josephus, quoted above. It this distant country was wilderness of Beersheba or some

adjoining parts of the so-called wilderness of Paran then it was merely an exercise in futility, as Ishmael could always have shared the fate with Isaac. We, therefore, find no plausibility in the excuse for separating Hagar and Ishmael from the family, nor would it serve the purpose of depriving Ishmael of the inheritance the way it has been asserted in the Genesis. Alternatively, if Hagar and Ishmael were sent away to a distant land then it could neither be the surroundings of Beersheba nor wilderness of Paran in Sinai Peninsula. The actual Beersheba and the wilderness of Paran were at Makkah, which was really 'a distant country' from the house of Abraham in Canaan, and the place where 'God was with the lad and he grew' (Gen. 21:20 KJV). Of this, we shall discuss in detail later on.

Reverting to the stay of Abraham in Gerar, we find in the Genesis that Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that the servants of Abimelech had seized, then Abraham gave some sheep and cattle to Abimelech and the two of them made an agreement. Abraham also separated seven lambs from his flock, and Abimelech inquired of him in the following words:

And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. (Gen. 21:28-30 KJV)

This was, perhaps, the first well dug into Beersheba by Abraham himself; and that too was subsequent to the episode of Hagar and Ishmael suffering from thirst in the so-called wilderness of Beersheba when God opened the eyes of Hagar and she saw a well of water. Under the circumstances, there is a remote possibility of Hagar's seeing a well in Beersheba before the one dug by Abraham himself, which reportedly lent its name to the place called Beersheba. Even if the well (not a fountain) was seen by Hagar, there was little chance for her to fill the bottle without a bucket and the rope, which she obviously did not possess. Josephus, perhaps, has stated something more feasible than the narration in the Genesis 21:19. He writes:

But a Divine Angel came to her, and told her of a fountain hard by, and bid her take care, and bring up the child, because she should be very happy by the preservation of Ismael. She then took courage, upon the prospect of what

was promised her, and, meeting with some shepherds, by their care she got clear of the distresses she had been in. (Antiquities of the Jews, Book I, Chap. 12, para 3)

It is also worth-noting that Beersheba had been the dwelling place of Abraham, Isaac, and Sarah; and if Hagar was in the same vicinity, it would not serve the purpose of casting out Hagar and her son. The Biblical writers are utterly confused on this point, or they have intentionally distorted the facts. Actually, Ishmael being the first born of Abraham and being dedicated to the Lord had to be separated from the family to serve at the then only house of the Lord i.e. Kaabah in Makkah. Abraham being the most devout servant of the Lord, hastened to send the suckling child along with his mother to Makkah. When the water was all gone, Hagar impatiently ran from Safa to Marwah Mountain to see if there could be anyone to help them. It was the seventh time when she reached near Safa and found a fountain of water gushing out of the rock near Kaabah. Hagar praised the Lord for the miracle, and tried to contain the water in a limited place. She, therefore, said 'Zamzam' which means 'Stop, Stop'. It is said that the flowing out of water stopped immediately, and it did not spread to other areas, and began to be utilized as a well of water in the descendants of Ishmael. Since the water was found after completion of seventh round between hills of Safa and Marwah, it is, therefore, presumed that the Biblical writers heard about the seven rounds and, therefore, named the well as Beersheba, instead of its correct name 'Zamzam'. We shall elaborate the point under the title of 'the Well and the Water' subsequently. Anyhow, it may be noted that Zamzam is the most holy water in the world which continues to quench the thirst of hundreds of thousands of people every day since the time of Hagar and Ishmael. The seven rounds between Sara and Marwah are known by the word 'Sae' which is an important ritual of Hajj and Umrah, and since the days of Abraham, all the Arabs have always been performing Sae between Safa and Marwah; and the same is continuing with ever increasing fervor till today. Presently, one finds that there is always a group of the pilgrims performing Sae continuously during the day or the night. The Zamzam and Sae are, therefore, a living tradition of Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael till today, and does not contain any artificial name, such as

Beersheba. It is also worth-noting that Beersheba is a later name given to the said place in south of Canaan, and it did not have any existence prior to 7th or 8th century BC, which we shall discuss later on. It transpires from the above, that the writers of the Genesis have misinformed their readers by showing the well of Hagar in Beersheba, instead of Kaabah in Makkah.

We find another description of Paran where the commentators of the Bible have shown it between Kadesh and Shur. Similarly, *The New Bible Dictionary* comments on Paran as under:

“A wilderness situated in the East Central Region of the Sinai Peninsula north from the traditional Sinai and South and South-East of Kadesh with Arabah and Gulf of Aqaba as it’s eastern border.”

The wilderness, stated above, falls in the present Sinai Peninsula; but the same is factually incorrect, as we shall discuss subsequently.

The *National Geographic Atlas of the World* and the maps appended with various versions of the Bible also show the same region as Paran lying to the West of Aqaba. *The Annotated Paragraph Bible* (published by The Religious Tract Society London, 1861) defines Paran as under:-

“Paran is the name of a district between Egypt and Edom and extending from Beer Sheba nearly to Sinai.”

Many other commentators on the Bible have also explained the region of Paran in the aforesaid area in the Sinai Peninsula without showing actual demarcation or boundary line of the same. It is, however, important to note that only the maps appended to various versions of the Bible show the wilderness of Paran at an estimated distance of 100-120 miles from Beer Sheba towards Sinai and extending to Elat at Aqaba. All other atlases of the world, including the local atlases in the Arab world do not show any wilderness of Paran in the region of Sinai Isthmus.

For further investigation, therefore, we take another verse from the Bible which tells us that Ishmael:

“The descendents of Ishmael lived in the territory between Havilah and Shur to the east of Egypt on the way to Assyria” (Gen.25-18).

To determine the location of the Desert of Paran, therefore, we need to find the geographic location of (1) **Shur**, (2) **Havilah**, and (3) **A Place towards the east of Egypt on the way of Assyria**. First of all we attempt to discuss Shur as under:

(1) Location of Shur

We find a reference to Shur in the verses quoted below:

“The angel of the Lord met Hagar at a spring in the desert on the road to Shur and said, “Hagar, Slave of Sari, where have you come from and where are you going” (Gen:16-7)

“Abraham moved from Mamre to the Southern Part of Canaan and lived between Kadesh and Shur”. (Gen: 20-1)

“Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea into the **desert of Shur**” (Ex: 15-22).

“Saul defeated the Amalekites fighting all the way from Havilah to Shur East of Egypt” (1-SA: 15-7).

“During the time of David his men would attack the people of Geshur, Grizi and Amalek who had been living in the region a very long time. He would raid their land as far as Shur, and all the way down to Egypt” (1-Sa-27-8).

The aforesaid descriptions in the Bible show the area of Shur in between Egypt and Beer Sheba near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The New Bible Dictionary also describes Shur region as under:-

“A wilderness-region in the north west part of Sinai-Isthmus, south of Mediterranean coast line and the way of the land of Philistine, between the present line of the Suez Canal on its west and the River of Egypt (q.v Wadi el-Arish) on its east. Abraham and Sara’s hand-maid Hagar fled to a well past Kadesh on the way to Shur” (Gen: xvi-7). For some time, Abraham dwelled between Kadesh and Shur and then sojourned at Gerar. Ishmael’s descendants ranged over an area that reached as far as Shur i.e. before [i.e east of] Egypt (Gen: xxv. 18). After passing through the Red Sea Israel entered the wilderness of Shur before going south into Sinai. (Ex: xv. 22) Shur lay into the direct route to Egypt from southern Palestine (1 Sa. Xv. 7 and, most explicitly, xxvii. 8).”

The afore-mentioned definition of Shur gives us an idea that this region is a part of Sinai Isthmus to the south of Mediterranean extending up to Suez Port on Egyptian side

and Beer Sheba on the Palestinian side. We, therefore, see an disagreement on the aforesaid description, and take it as a settled issue.

After identifying "Shur" in the manner stated above, we need to find Havilah so that we may search the wilderness of Paran in between Havilah and Shur as described by the Bible.

(2) The Location of Havilah

During our study so far, we found that the Bible described Paran in between Havilah and Shur. The location of Shur has been determined without any doubt in the foregoing discussions, while Havilah could not be found around the Sinai Peninsula and its location remains obscure so far.

a) Havilah – West of Ural

Some commentators of the Bible have referred to Havilah as "a land west of Ural. It is not; however, clear whether 'from Ural' the commentators meant the mountain range of Ural or the river Ural. As the areas covered by the river Ural are widely different from those of the mountain range of Ural at many points, yet we know that the river as well as the mountain range starts from Russia and end in Kazakhstan. The River Ural falls in the Caspian and at some places, it becomes the traditional dividing line between Asia and Europe. Both the aforesaid regions cannot be the Havilah of the Bible, as it suggests Havilah somewhere in or around the Arabian Peninsula, having some close connection with the lands occupied by the Israelites. Further, the said area is neither to the East of Egypt nor does it fall on the routes from Egypt to Assyria, as described by the Bible (Gen. 25:18). Hence the said Havilah cannot match with its description in the Bible.

b) Havilah – in North Central Arabia

Another group of Christian scholars has opined that Havilah was the old name for 'Ha'ail' or 'Hayil' in central Arabia. (See "Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land," edited by George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D., Litt. D., etc., 1915 Hodder & Stoughton, Warwick Square, London, E.C., on page xiii under, "Notes to Maps, "). They also suggest that the course of River Pishon (Gen. 2:11-12) flowing round the country of Havilah, might have been from Hail /

Havilah to Jubba, to Jauf, to Wadi-Ubaiyidh, and to Euphrates. In our opinion, the aforesaid exercise by these Christian scholars mainly attempts to 'make the scripture true' and the same is not supported by any reliable historical or geographical evidence. Moreover, there is no evidence that the said Havilah/Ha'il region of Arabia was ever known for pure gold, rare perfume, and precious stones as defined by Gen. 2:12.

Similarly, the altitude and the climate of the said region debar it from being a land in the vicinity of the Garden of Eden, as we find in Gen. 2: 10-12. We, therefore, require to search for Havilah in some other region to find some closeness with its description in the Genesis.

c) Havilah – in Arabia and Africa

We presume that the writers of the Genesis had only a vague notion of the region described as Havilah and they never visited the said region nor had they any reliable information about the same. Anyhow, keeping in view various references in the Bible, the most probable site of Havilah seems to be the areas beyond Makkah towards Yemen i.e. southern part of Arabia on the eastern bank of the Red Sea, and also the lands on the southwestern bank in Africa i.e. the costal lands of the present Eritrea, Djibouti, and near coast lands of Ethiopia.

The New Bible Dictionary (published by The London Inter Varsity Fellowship, reprinted in November 1963) defines Havilah as under:-

1. A land in **the neighborhood of Eden**, through which meandered the river Pishon, and in which was found gold, bdellium, and shoham-stone (Gen. 2:11-12).
2. An area mentioned in the phrase 'from Havilah to Shur'; inhabited by the Ishmaelites (Gen. 25:18) and Amalekites (1 Sa. 15:7). It probably lay therefore in the area of Sinai and NW Arabia.
3. A name that occurs twice in Gen. 5; as a descendant of Ham through **Cush** (Gen 5:7; 1 Ch. 1:9) and as a **descendant of Shem through Joktan**, Eber, Shelah, and Arpachshad (Gen. 5: 29; 1 Ch. 1: 23). These may be entirely distinct, but as the names associated with them indicate a **possible area of settlement in S Arabia and across the**

Bab el-Mandeb in Africa, it may be that the name indicates one strong tribe which had absorbed a weaker group.

It transpires from the above that Havilah was the name of a descendant of Shem through **Joktan**, Eber, Shelah, and Arphaxad, and in the name of the aforesaid Havilah and his descendants, the area between Mecca and Yemen on South-East bank of the Red Sea was named as Havilah. On the other hand, we find that there was another person named Havilah who was the descendant of Ham through Cush (Gen. 5:7; 1 Ch. 1:9) whose descendants settled along the southwest bank of the Red Sea and the entire coastal area of the present Djibouti, Eritrea, and parts of Ethiopia was known as Havilah.

Under the circumstances, we can safely agree with the new Bible Dictionary finding that **Havilah was 'an area of settlement in South Arabia and also the area across the Bab-el-Mandeb in Africa'**, as stated in detail above. Other lands in the vicinity of the afore-stated Havilah in Africa is Cush around which the river Gihon (perhaps a branch of the Nile) flowed. Referring to river Gihon winding through the whole land of Cush (Gen. 2:13), the dictionary says, "Cush in the Bible usually signifies Ethiopia" (P. 333). As such, **Havilah stands well-established on both sides of the Red Sea in Arabia and Africa**. We also note that the said land of Havilah in Africa as well as in Arabia is the Havilah to which perhaps the earliest, the ancestors of mankind went from 'Eden.' As the same has been described in the vicinity of the Garden of Eden or perhaps the land of Eden (Gen. 2:10-13). We have already discussed the same in detail in our article on the *The Garden of Eden*. In the aforementioned article, we concluded that the most probable site for the Garden of Eden were the regions in the southeastern Arabia including Zufar, Hadramawt, and the hill tracks of Yemen with San'a its capital. We also believe that in the ancient times the entire aforesaid region was known as Eden to which the present name of the Aden Port is a living evidence till today.

We also have reasons to believe that the earliest abode of ancestors of mankind was in the same area from where mankind moved in three different directions. The first move was perhaps from the Arabia Felix to the northeast up to the Gulf of Oman and thereafter along the Persian Gulf reaching Babylonian region and from there to other parts of

the world. On the other hand, they moved towards north along the eastern bank of the Red Sea reaching the present Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt etc. Still another faction crossed the Red Sea at Bab-el-Mandeb to occupy the present areas covered by Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and other regions in Africa.

As regards Havilah, we find another reference as under:

“Havilah is unknown, but perhaps in Arabia”. *A New Commentary on the Holy Scripture with Apocrypha* (London 1928). In “Peaks Commentary” also we find “Havilah is unknown but perhaps in Arabia. Cush is generally supposed to be Ethiopia” (P. 139-140).

A map at page 8 of “Annotated Paragraph Bible” of the religious Tract society London 1861 has shown Havilah at three different places as detailed blow:



(a) Havilah being the northeastern part of Arabia i.e. area touching the Persian Gulf approximately from present Kuwait to Ad-Dammam of Saudi Arabia.

We have already discussed the said Havilah as ancient name for Ha'il and had also given our reasons to reject the same as the probable site for Havilah of the Bible.

(b) Havilah an area touching the Red Sea i.e. Southern Arabia approximately falling partly in Saudia and partly in

Yemen. Sheba or Saba in the map are shown further south from this Havilah.

(c) Havilah has also been identified in Ethiopia opposite to Havilah in the Saudi Arabia and the area of the Havilah seems to be extending to Bab-el-Mandeb excluding perhaps Djibouti.

In our view, the location of Havilah mentioned in (a) above has no justification except the eagerness of the commentators to show Havilah in the vicinity of the Garden of Eden near the rivers Tigris and Euphrates as described in Gen. 2:14.

The location of Havilah mentioned in b & c above are on opposite sides of the Red Sea covering also the areas of Saba and Sheba in Yemen as well as Saba in Ethiopia. In Yemen, it extends to Aden and perhaps Hadramawt (Gen. 10-07, 1 Ch.1-9). From all this, we understand that the Biblical writers described Havilah as an area beyond Makkah extending up to Bab-el-Mandeb on one side, and a similar area on the opposite side of the Red Sea in Africa. The Cush in Nubia of Ethiopia was also easily accessible through Bab-el-Mandeb which we know was the shortest distance by sea being only about 15 miles from Yemen to present Djibouti. All the trade of then Ethiopian areas routed through Bab-el-Mandeb to Saba and to Midian passing through Makkah and other cities on the route towards Palestine and Egypt. Petra was another junction from where the caravans went to Canaan, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Elam etc.

"The caravans from all ages, from the interior of Arabia and from the Gulf of Persia, from Hadramaut on the ocean, and even from Sabea or Yemen, appear to have pointed to Petra as a common centre; and from Petra the tide seems again to have branched out in every direction, to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, through Arsinoe, Gaza, Tyre, Jerusalem, and Damascus, and by other routes, terminating at the Mediterranean." (Easton's Bible Dictionary, under Sela)

Elsewhere Petra has been described as under:

"The stronghold and treasure city of the **Nabataeans, an Arab people**, Petra is referred to as Sela in the Bible (see 2 Kings 14:7). It was situated in the land of Edom, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, near the points of

intersection of great caravan routes from Gaza on the Mediterranean Sea, from Damascus, from Elath (now Al 'Aqabah, Jordan) on the Red Sea, and from the Persian Gulf. From the 4th century BC until the 2nd century AD, Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom. The Romans conquered it in 106 AD and made it part of the Roman province of Arabia Petraea. (Microsoft Encarta 2005, under Petra)

Goods from India and Far East were also brought to Aden area from where it was sent to Egypt, Syria and certain parts of Europe. The name Aden given to the port connecting Far East to Arabia and other countries may have been of some later origin but the possibility cannot be ruled out that it is in commemoration of the pre historic name of the region. There is an overwhelming evidence suggesting that the area in the vicinity of this Aden in Yemen may have been the most plausible site for the Garden of Eden of the Genesis as we have already discussed in detail under our article *The Garden of Eden*.

From all the foregoing, we find that the commentators of the Bible are well aware of the location of Havilah, but they feel shy to declare the exact location thereof to avoid confrontation with the Bible statement that Hagar and Ishmael lived in Paran which was in between Shur and Havilah, which to them was in the Sinai Peninsula.

As regards east of Egypt on the way to Assyria, the same will be discussed herein below:

d) Havilah; East of Egypt on the way to Assyria

As discussed earlier, the writers of the Genesis lacked accurate geographical knowledge of the region due to which they were unable to give a better description of the Wilderness of Paran or the dwelling places of Ishmael, Hagar, and their descendants. Up to the reign of David, the Israelites never traveled outside to regions extending beyond Midian and Petra, and they had only a vague concept of the areas now covered by Hijaz and Yemen at present. Anyhow, their concept was not absolutely incorrect as by Havilah they generally understood the areas of Southern Arabia from present Mecca to Yemen. The oldest trade route known to history had been from present Hadramawt and Aden to present Mecca, Midian, Aqaba, and

Sela or Petra of the later periods. From Aqaba one route was direct towards Shur and Egypt, while the other route was either from Petra to Jericho in Palestine towards Egypt or from Petra to Damascus and Assyria etc. As such, the dwelling places of Ishmael and his descendants falling on this route were the areas between the Midian and Yemen on the one side and from Midian to Petra, Damascus and Babylonia on the other. The central place of the foresaid region was Mecca with the ancient house of Lord there. **The wilderness of Paran is, therefore, the wilderness starting from Beersheba towards present Jordan covering the entire area of present Hijaz province of Saudi Arabia.** From Mount Paran, therefore, we understand generally the Mountains of Hijaz and particularly the mountains of the Mecca range i.e. from where that the last Prophet of Allah shone on the people of the region along with 10,000 saints of the Lord with a fiery law in his right hand. The light of the Sun rising from the Mount Paran is ever and ever on the increase and spreading throughout the world at a speed much faster than that of other religions in the world.

It was the ancient house of the Lord, at present Makkah, to which Abraham dedicated his first born, and the most beloved only son Ishmael, who being dedicated to the house of the Lord stood before the said house throughout his life. He died there and was buried near walls of Kaaba. The place where he was buried is known as Hateem at present. The descendants of Ishmael formed 12 tribes in due course and covered almost the entire Arabian Peninsula. Among them the Nabataeans were the descendants of Nebat (*or* Nebaioth), the eldest son of Ishmael. They subsequently moved towards the north and formed a strong dynasty and ruled Petra from 4th century BC up to 108 BC.

Syed Abul-Ala-Muadudi's Visit to Sinai

We also learn that Moulana Syed Abul-Ala-Muadudi visited the Sinai Mountains during year 1959-60 as we find in Safar Nama Arz-ul-Quran written by Moulana Muhammad Asim, the companion of the Moulana, during the said journey. Mr. Asim also has referred to both spots known as "Feiran Valley" as well as the "Feiran Oasis" in the said

Safar Nama at the places mentioned above. But he did not refer to any desert of Paran in the Sinai Peninsula.

As we do not find any reference in the Bible pertaining to Paran valley on their respective sites in the map, therefore, it is presumed that the said Wadi Feiran or Oasis of Feiran did not exist at the time of Exodus and their present names are of some recent past. Anyhow, the foresaid places cannot not be confused with wilderness of Paran of the Exodus, which should be down from Jabali-Musa towards Kadish Barnia etc. Further, the wilderness of Paran must be an area spacious enough to accommodate wanderings of about 2 million Israelites along with all of their sheep, goats and other animals for a continuous period of 40 years. It should also be at a distance of three days journey from Mt. Siani. We, therefore, conclude that the said valley Feiran and Oasis Paran cannot be the wilderness of Paran referred in the Exodus.

Visit of the Researchers, as per a Website

Location of Sinai

It will not be out of place to mention here that the controversy over the exact location of the Mt. Sinai and the desert of wandering is still going on and requiring further search in the matter. As an example:

In a recent book titled "In search of the Mountain of God," by Bob Cornuke and David Halbrook (Broadman and Holman, 2000), Bob Cornuke (a Christian) recounts his story of going into Saudi Arabia with his friend Larry Williams (a non-Christian commodities trader). They uncovered evidence of an alternate site where the real Mt. Sinai might be. Bob Cornuke was a police officer, SWAT team member, and crime scene investigator in Southern California and is the President of the Bible Archaeology Search and Exploration (BASE) Institute BaseInstitute.org. He and Mr. Williams have produced a video and book (available on that site) where they claim to have found evidence in Saudi Arabia to support that Mt. Sinai is located within its borders. Now, I must admit that this has not been verified by any "official" archaeologists, but the video, which I have seen, does raise some interesting possibilities.

Mr. Cornuke and Williams claim to have simply let the Bible guide them as they attempted to locate the actual route of the

Jews of the Exodus. Through trial and error over several weeks, they followed what they believed was the route as laid out by the Bible and they found the items described in Exodus 13 - 19 including, springs, a split rock, an altar, an underwater land bridge at the end of the Sinai Peninsula where the people of Israel could have crossed, and much more. The present location of Mt. Sinai, according to the locals in their account, is known as Jabal Al Laus as is traditionally known by them as the mount of Moses. The Saudis have the area fenced off with warning signs in Arabic and English telling people not to enter. If this is so, why would the Saudis not want anyone to know about the place? It might be because if Mt. Sinai is located in Muslim territory then one of the most holy places of the Jewish and Christian religions it could pose serious political problems. I must admit that this is speculative at present and it has not been verified. But the video was compelling. Whether or not this is a valid option is yet to be determined and it is supportive of the idea that the traditional location of Exodus route might indeed be incorrect, as Gal. 4:25 seems to suggest. (From: <http://www.answering-christianity.com>)

The aforementioned search of the Mountain of God has somehow suggested that Moses and the people of Israel might have crossed the Gulf of Aqabah, at the straight of Tiran or some other place to reach Midian or Jab-al-Laus.

The route of Exodus and the desert of wanderings has been under speculation since long and most of the writers say that there are no archeological evidence showing any remains of about 2 million people who stayed in the traditional desert of Paran for about 40 years. There is no evidence in the region to support the foresaid contention. Furthermore, the statement pertaining to living of Ishmaelites in Sinai Peninsula is against the established historical facts as there is overwhelming and undeniable evidence that Ishmael and Hagar lived in Mecca, and were buried besides of the walls of Kaabah (in Al-Hateem) in Mecca.

During later periods, however, there had been certain Biblical scholars who suggested several other sites as "true Mountain Sinai" but their claim also lacked archeological or historical evidence to support their contention. As such, the "true Mountain Sinai", is still a debatable issue open to further investigation.

As stated earlier, The National Geographic Atlas of the World shows one Feiran on east coast of the Gulf of Suez

about 31 miles south of Port Zeneeima while Tor of Tur (Elim of the Bible) is about 39 mile further south of it towards Ras Muhammad . The aforesaid Wadi Feiran, though a very small place, is on the generally accepted route of the Exodus.

There is, however, ample evidence that the desert of Paran may be a much wider region beyond Aqabah and Midian, and the same covered entire coastline of the Red Sea up to Yemen. The Bible had also mentioned that Moses went out of Egypt to the land of Midian, east of Gulf of Aqabah, as the same lay outside the territory ruled and possessed by the Pharaoh (Ex: ii-15-16). During his flight from Egypt, Moses had stayed in and around the Midian region and Arabah for about 20 years before his return to Egypt and was, therefore, conversant with the entire region much earlier than the Exodus. It is, therefore, probable that he followed the beaten track to reach Midian alongwith all the Israelites to avoid any encounter with the Egyptian forces chasing them and he went on the other side of the Gulf of Aqabah i.e. outside the region of the influence of the Egyptians. There is also much of archeological evidence to prove that Pharaoh had multiple mining interests in the Sinai Peninsula and Moses must have got out of the region to a safer place i.e. to Median and other vast territories towards the east which were known as Arabah and the same is the Arabian Desert at present.

Major C. S. Jarvis

For a reliable witness, we have one major C.S. Jarvis who remained Governor of Sinai for about 9 years before year 1931 and during his tenure, he travelled throughout the Peninsula extensively. One of his missions behind these travels was to verify the facts as per 'Exodus' and 'Numbers' and he made hectic efforts to corroborate the record of the Bible with the Geographic facts of the region. His intensive studies of the Bible and extensive tours in the Peninsula could not help him to find the wilderness of Paran in Sinai. In his Book entitled "Yesterday and Today in Sinai" London 1931, he has traced the past history of Sinai as well as topography of the entire peninsula but he has not made any mention of wilderness of Paran in the said region. Major Jarvis also did not refer to any Ishmaelites having

ever lived in Sinai. He also does not agree with the traditional route of the Exodus i.e. after crossing the Red Sea to Jabali-Musa. On the other hand, Major Jarvis has advanced good reasons to prove the impossibility of the traditional route and has argued effectively in favor of an alternative route along the Mediterranean coastline being the one most plausible. He thinks, that the Israelites moved from the land of Goshen along the Mediterranean coast and then to Jabali-Halal which according to him is the suitable mountain as the possible 'site of law giving'. According to him, the host might have moved to the present Aine-Gaderiat which is perhaps the Kadesh Barnea of the Bible. The aforesaid Jabali-Halal is a mountain in northern Sinai about 30 miles from Al-Arish on the coast of the Mediterranean Ocean.

It is outside the purview of our present study to evaluate the reasons given by Mr. Jervis in support of his contention, yet we observe that the said alternative route is in the so-called wilderness of Shur and does not touch the so-called Desert of Paran. Major Jervis, however, has not made any mention of the Ishmaelites having ever lived anywhere in Shur or Paran in Sinai. A detailed map of Sinai Peninsula has also been appended to the book of Major Jervis referred to above which does not show the wilderness of Paran anywhere in the region. This proves that the wilderness or Paran did not exist in Sinai at all.

Major C. S. Jarvis in his map, given above, has shown two small places as Feiran. The first is the Wadi Feiran about twenty miles south east of Abu-Zenima, a small wilderness on the bank of Gulf of Suez. Another Feiran (Paran) Oasis is shown up on the hills about 30 miles to the east of the afore-mentioned Wadi Feiran. The second Feiran is an Oasis on the Sinai hills hardly 3 miles in length and much less in breadth. This oasis of Paran is perhaps the Rphedim of the Old Testament (Gen: 17-1). From Feiran Oasis, Jabali-Musa is, about 30 miles to South East of it, while the famous monastery of St. Catherine is on the foot of Jabal-e-Musa.

The Ruins of Hermit City of Paran with a cathedral are still found at the foot of Jabali-Serbal which is about 5 KM's from the aforesaid ruins. It is interesting to note that Jabali-Serbal had been considered as mountain of law up to the beginning of 4th century AD and thereafter the Christians accepted Jabali-Musa as the Mountain of Law. In

fact 'the only verifiable reason this traditional site was designated "Mount Sinai" was because a Roman mystic designated it and Helena, the mother of Constantine 1, anointed it as the true "Mount Sinai" early in the 4th century A.D. Incidentally, it is worth-mentioning here that Helena also claimed having discovered the true holy sepulture in Jerusalem and the 'true cross of the Christ' which then received uniform acceptance from the Christians as an ultimate truth. The aforesaid miracles occurred during a short visit of Helena to Jerusalem in early 4th century i.e. about three hundred years after the death/ascension of Jesus but no doubts could be raised on the new findings as the same had the declaration and attestation of the mother of the Emperor and no one could afford to challenge the divine rights of the kings.

HISTORY OF ISHMAELI TRIBES

All the Arab historians agree with the tradition that Ishmaelites had been the overwhelming majority among the descendants of Abraham, and the descendants of Abraham from his wives Ketura or Hajun occupied various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Most of the Ishmaelites stationed within the present Hijaz province of Saudi Arabia or other lands adjoining Hijaz, such as Nafud, Tehama, and parts of the Jordan of the present. We find in the Genesis that God responded to the petition of Abraham about his children, in the following manner:

And he (God) brought him (Abraham) forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. (Gen 15:5 KJV)

There can be no denial of the fact that the Ishmaelites had been an overwhelming majority among the descendants of Abraham, as foretold by the Lord Himself in the following words:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; **twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.** (Gen 17:20 KJV)

We know that the word of God is an accomplished fact. Hence, the promise of God about exceedingly multiplied progeny from 12 princes of Ishmael must have been fulfilled in making the Ishmaelites a great nation. Obviously, **no great nation could ever live or remain concealed or confined within the so-called Wilderness of Paran in the Sinai Peninsula, as propounded by the Genesis.** One also fails to deduce whether it was more due to the geographic ignorance or due to the prejudice of Israeli writers against their rivals, that they dealt with the progeny of Hagar and Ishmael in a casual manner just as the modern police ends the pursuit of certain absconders with the reports 'missed, believed killed.' The Biblical scholars have always failed to trace out the great nation, the Ishmaelites, living in Sinai Peninsula at any time in the history, nor could they find any remains of the abodes of 12 princes and their progeny there. The factual position of the

Ishmaelites enjoying sovereignty over major parts of the Arabian Peninsula with their religious and cultural center at Makkah is also not acceptable to the Jewish as well as the Christian scholars. Come what may, they are not prepared to accept that Hagar, Ishmael, and their progeny had their initial settlement at Makkah from where their descendants in the later periods shifted to various other parts of Arabia where they always had a supremacy over the non-Ishmaelite tribes. The Western writers mostly try to disprove the contention of the Arabs being the descendants of Abraham, merely on the ground that there is no historical evidence, i.e. a written proof for the same. They also feel obliged to make the scripture true and to deny anything else, which is against the assertions in the Bible. Such writers, therefore, opine that the Arabs are the false claimants of the descendants of Abraham, which Arabs profess only to prove their nobility by establishing their direct descendants from Abraham.

The present writer, however, ventures to differ emphatically from the afore-stated opinion of the Western writers which seem to be based on their prejudice against the Arabs/Muslims. Such writers have no material evidence to support their contention which is against the true history and the ground facts in the region. As for the written evidence, we may point out that the Arabs were mostly illiterate people who could neither read nor write anything. They, however, had been gifted with strong memory and remembered all their genealogies, the traditions, and the poetry very correctly. No book had ever been written in Arabia before the Qur'an. The inability of the Arabs to record their history in writing, therefore, cannot deprive them of their glorious past in the Arabian Peninsula nor does it make them dependant on the writings of the others. The Israeli writings can neither disprove the relationship of the major branch among the descendants of Abraham with him nor can anyone deny their existence in the Arabian Peninsula from time immemorial. The Arabs always had well preserved and perfectly memorized record of their genealogies as well as the traditions of the old and no one has any cogent reasons to deny the same. All the nations in the world rely upon their own traditions than on the writings of the rival nations around them. The Arabs never considered the Israelites of any real importance as they had always been a small fry as compared with the Arabs

representing the overwhelming majority among the descendants of Abraham. Although the Bible contains many names of the ancient ancestors settled in different parts of Arabia, yet we reproduce hereunder an independent account of the descendants of Abraham, as given by Flavious Josephus.

HOW THE NATION OF THE TROGLODYTES WERE DERIVED FROM ABRAHAM BY KETURAH

Abraham after this married Keturah, by whom six sons were born to him; men of courage and of sagacious minds: -- Zambran, and Jazar, and Madan, and Madian, and Josabak, and Sous. Now the sons of Sous were Sabathan and Dadan; -- the sons of Dadan were Latusim, and Assur, and Luom; -- the sons of Madian were Ephas, and Ophren, and Anoch, and Ebidas, and Eldas. Now, for all these sons and grandsons, Abrahaam contrived to settle them in colonies; and they took possession of Troglodytis, and the country of Arabia the Happy, as far as it reaches to the Red Sea. It is related of this Ophren, that he made war against Libya, and took it; and that his grandchildren, when they inhabited it, called it (from his name) Africa; and indeed Alexander Polyhistor gives his attestation to what here say; who speaks thus: "Cleodemus the prophet, who was also called Malchus, who wrote a history of the Jews, in agreement with the History of Moses, their legislator, relates, that there were many sons born to Abraham by Keturah; nay, he names three of them, Apher, and Surim, and Japhran: that from Surim was the land of Assyria denominated; and that from the other two (Apher and Japhran) the country of Africa took its name; because these men were auxiliaries to Hercules, when he fought against Libya and Antaeus; and that Hercules married Aphra's daughter, and of her he begat a son, Diodorus; and that Sophon was his son; from whom that barbarous people called Sophacians were denominated." (*The Works of Flavious Josephus, Antiquity of the Jews, Book I, chp. 15, p. 44-45*)

This proves that most of the people in and around the Peninsula were the direct descendants of Abraham, and the Israelites had no primacy over them in respect of their descentance from the said patriarch. Arabia had undoubtedly been the cradle of the human race. The most probable site of the Garden of Eden was south-east part of the Arabian Peninsula, consisting of Yemen and Hadramawt

areas. Makkah, the center of the Peninsula, where Adam built the first house of the Lord on Earth, which was reconstructed by Sheth, Noah, and other Prophet before Abraham. Abraham dedicated his first born and the only son Ishmael to the ancient house of the Lord, and took the suckling child along with his mother to stay there in the service of the Lord. Later on, it was Abraham who rebuilt the walls of Kaaba with the help of Ishmael, the first person ever dedicated to the Lord to stay as a priest at the said house. Ever since the time of Abraham, the Arabs had always been the proud possessors of the house of the Lord, and also the followers in the faith of Abraham. They broadly struck to the legacy and traditions of Abraham for about 2200 years after him, till the idolatry was introduced by Amr bin Luhayy, sometime after 400 AD at Makkah. The Arabs, therefore, had direct descendance from Abraham and also an unbroken and undisturbed maintenance of the traditions of Abraham. As against this, the Israelites had a gap of about 450 years absence from Canaan, and also from the environments and traditions of Abraham. During all this period, the Israelites remained enslaved and crushed under hard labor at the hands of the Egyptians. They forgot all the teachings and traditions of Abraham and nothing of him could be preserved by them.

With the emancipation of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, Moses made it mandatory for them to maintain a written record of the law and the traditions of Moses, and also to communicate the same to others. He and other prophets after him infused the spirit of reading and writing in Israel, primarily with an aim to record the law and the history of the nation. No doubt, they made good use of the art; but at the same time their partiality forced them to promote the self-interest of Israel, and to denigrate the rival nations around them. The prophets, the law, and the art of writings had been the only edge of Israel over other nations in the region but alas! they rebelled against the prophets and the Lord, and also distorted the history and the Holy Book by the vile pen of the scribes (...).

Arabs, on the other hand, had always been a great nation as ordained by the Lord; and they enjoyed sovereignty over the Arabian Peninsula consisting of an area measuring 1.2 million sq miles. They never cared a fig about the perverse writings of the Israelites, nor were they aware of such

writings. Anyhow, just to refute the contention of the Israeli and the Christian writers, we shall quote two references from Flavius Josephus, the most authentic historian among the Israelites of the old. While describing the incidence of Abimelech and the episode of Hagar and Ishmael, he has given the following title to his chapter XII, book I, Antiquities of the Jews, in the following manner:

CONCERNING ABIMELECH AND CONCERNING ISHMAEL, THE SON OF ABRHAM; AND CONCERNING THE ARABIANS, WHO WERE HIS POSTERITY.

In addition to above, we shall also like to reproduce the contents of para IV under the title, given above, as under:

When the lad was grown up, he married a wife, by birth an Egyptian, from whence the mother was herself derived originally. Of this wife were born to Ismael twelve sons: Nabaoith, Kedar, Abdeel, Mabsham, Idumas, Masmaos, Masaos, Chodad, Theman, Jetur, Hapehsus, Cadmas. These inhabited all the country from Euphrates to the Red Sea, and called it Nabatene. They are an Arabian nation, and name their tribes from these, both because of their own virtue, and because of the dignity of Abraham their father.

There is still another reference in the Antiquities where Josephus narrates about the birth and the circumcision of Isaac which is as under:

And they circumcised him upon the eighth day and from that time the Jews continue the custom of circumcising their sons within that number of days. But as for the Arabians, they circumcise after the thirteenth year, because **Ismael, the founder of their nation**, who was born to Abraham of the concubine, was circumcised at that age; concerning whom I will presently give a particular account, with great exactness. (p. 44)

The afore-stated evidence from the house of Israel is enough to refute the false contention of certain writers in the West who profess that the Arabs in Hijaz are not the real progeny of Abraham. As regards the narration regarding Ishmael's birth from the concubine or his marrying 'a wife by birth an Egyptian', Josephus had a plausible excuse in the following words:

I am under a necessity of relating this history as it is

described in the sacred books. (Ibid, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book III, chp. 5, p. 85).

From the reservations of Josephus, as above, we can conclude that almost all the Jewish and the Christian writers are under the same obligation, and cannot accept the truth even if it stands established in the broad daylight. **The fact is that not only Hijaz, but entire Arabia, Syria, and parts of Africa were inhabited by the descendants of Abraham** but the Israelites can be excused for the reason that they knew nothing about other regions beyond their own borders. This is why their knowledge about the Ishmaelites does not go beyond the names of 12 sons of Ishmael, about whom they knew nothing beyond the Ishmael's stay in the so-called Wilderness of Paran in Sinai Peninsula. Anyhow, another reference confirming the Ishmaelites as the Arabians carrying spices is made in the story of Joseph and his brothers in the following words:

3. But Judas, being one of Jacob's sons also., seeing some Arabians, of the posterity of Ismael, carrying spices and Syrina wares out of the land of Gilead to the Egyptians, after Reubel was gone, advised his brethren to draw Joseph out of the pit, and sell him to the Arabians; for if he should die among strangers a great way off, they should be freed from his barbarous action. (Ibid, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book II, chp. 3, p. 55).

The ignorance of the Israelites and other historians about the Arabian lands did not end in the ancient past. Even in the 19th century, the position was not much changed. This is evident from the footnote under chap. 11 of Book II of the Antiquities on the page 41. Regarding the pillar of salt standing in the days of Josephus the redactor remarks as under:

I do not know. Its remote situation, at the utmost southern point of the Sea of Sodom, in the wild and dangerous deserts of Arabia, makes it exceeding difficult for inquisitive travellers to examine the place; and for common reports of country people, at a distance, they are not very satisfactory. In the mean time, I have no opinion of Le Clerc's dissertation or hypothesis about this question, which can only be determined by eye-witnesses. When Christina princes, so called, lay aside their foolish and unchristian wars and quarrels, and send a body of fit persons to travel over the east, and bring us faithful accounts of all ancient monuments, and procure us copies of all ancient records, at present lost among us, we

may hope for full satisfaction in such inquires, but hardly before. . (Ibid, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book I, chp. XI, p. 41).

The Arabian historians have pointed out settlements of 12 sons of Ishmael and their descendants throughout the Arabian Peninsula and historians from the West have also confirmed the same. A detailed account of the settlements of the descendants of 12 sons of Ishmael can also be found in "Maqalat-e-Sir Syed" (Published by Majlis Taraqye Adab, Lahore, 1963, Pages 167-177). The Arabian map and the history of various tribes of Arabs can be consulted for further satisfaction of the scholars.

The descendants of Ishmael gradually moved to various parts of Arabia especially on southwestern side along the coast of the Red Sea. This part is the actual Paran where Ishmaelites have been living ever since the departure of Ishmael and Hagar from Canaan and they have always been occupying the same region till the present times. The aforesaid areas are presently known as Hijaz province of the Saudi Arabia with Mecca its central place, Capital City, and the all time Holiest place in the world due to Kaaba being The First House of The Lord on Earth. From time immemorial the Arab traditions and the Muslim literature refers to Mecca valley including all its mountains as Faran. And this is the only place which has been the central abode of the Ishmaelites.

Subsequently, the Ishmaelites started spreading into the entire Arabian Peninsula including southern parts of Iraq and Syria and the present Jordan. They also flanked Canaan / Palestine on the north-eastern as well as the southern sides of excluding Sinai Peninsula. We, therefore, conclude that the areas from Midian to Yemen i.e. major parts of Hijaz and some adjoining areas of Arabia towards the north. The Bible refers to it as under:

"The descendants of Ishmael lived in the territory of Havilah and Shur in the East of Assyria. (Gen. 25:18)

The same is the wilderness of Paran (Gen. 21:21) which has always been the central abode of the Ishmaelites for last 4,000 years. Since the time of Abraham, Mecca has always been the pivotal point of the region which is the Mt. Paran of the Genesis where the first born of Abraham stood before the Lord at the ancient and the first House of the

Lord on Earth. Islamic traditions tell us that Adam built Kaaba for the first time and received divine revelations there. After the deluge of Noah, Ibrahim and Ishmael rebuilt Kaaba, and the most of the descendants of Abraham settled in Arabia i.e. around Mecca. The boastful claim of Israel to be the only descendants of Abraham is a false and farcical propagation of a small faction against majority of the descendants of Abraham holding areas which were more than 2 hundred times the possessions of Israelites in Palestine.

The Wilderness and the Well

The Qur'an reveals that Abraham, after leaving Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness (where he raised the wall of Kaaba subsequently), prayed to God as under:

ربنا انى اسكنت من ذريتي بواد غير ذي زرع عند بيتك المحرم

(O our Lord! I have made Some of my offsprings to dwell in a valley without cultivation by Thy Sacred House) (Al-Quran)

The valley without any cultivation is essentially a wilderness. Hence, the dwelling place near the House of the Lord could be no other place except Mecca and the well of water shown to Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 16:7 and 21:19) is there till today. Hundreds of thousands of people from Mecca and the pilgrims visiting Mecca from all the parts of the world quench their thirst from the aforesaid well, named 'Zamzam'. Millions of gallons of water are taken to other parts of the world everyday as a holy souvenir from the Kaaba. This is the place about which Abraham prayed further to Allah:

"O our Lord! They may establish regular prayer so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them. And feed them with fruits so that they may give thanks." (Al-Quran)

We find that the aforesaid prayer of Abraham was completely fulfilled as the descendants of Ishmael always continued to enjoy the love and respect from all the people in the Arabian Peninsula. The Kaaba, since the time of Abraham, always remained a sanctuary and the Ishmaelites continued to enjoy respect from all the people in Arabia. Similarly, Kaaba remained a central point of prayer throughout the region and since Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) the regular prayers were established there.

Hundreds of thousands of men offer their prayers around the Kaaba at Mecca five times a day, while hundreds of millions of Muslims throughout the world offer their five time daily prayers facing towards the Kaaba. The 'Tawaf' (moving in circulation around Kaaba) started since Abraham is performed all the 24 hours a day, with only breaks of a few minutes to perform the mandatory prayers. This is the first and the only House of the Lord God on Earth which remains open day and night where hundreds of thousands of people continue to perform Tawaf and offer their prayers continuously.

As for 'feeding' the descendants of Abraham with fruits, one must know that all types of fruits from the world are available at Mecca throughout the year. There is no other place where one could find all types of fruits throughout the year. It is exclusively due to the prayer of Ibrahim that all types of fruits from the world are available to the descendants of Ibrahim, although they happened to be in the area without any cultivation i.e. the wilderness.

It transpires from this that the place where Ishmael and Hagar lived was this Paran (Faran), i.e. the Mecca valley, and no other place outside this region.

All the facts mentioned above confirm that the Lord shined forth from Mt. Paran and established His fiery law in entire Arabia which subsequently took hold in all other countries surroundings Arabia far and wide. The word of God ushered from the mouth of the said promised Prophet has spread as an immutable word of God throughout the world as an evidence of the ultimate truth and the last revelations from the Lord. As such, the prophecies of Moses in Deu. 18:15-18 and 33:2 stand completely fulfilled. Similarly, the venue of the Divine revelations and kingdom of God also stood shifted from Palestine to Hijaz i.e. Paran of the Bible.

The Lawgiver

Islamic traditions tell us that Adam was the first Rasool of Allah who throughout his life lived in the surroundings of Kaaba at Mecca and died there. After him, the most

important Rasool was Noah who also spent most of his time in Arabia and southern Iraq. After Noah another great Rasool was Hud who remained in Yemen in the areas near Hazremaut. Swaleh was a great prominent Rasool after Hud who lived at Midian-e-Swaleh in Arabia. Abraham also belonged to North Arabia or Southern Iraq from where he shifted to Canaan. It may be noted that according to Islamic traditions Ibrahim had been the greatest Prophet and Rasool of Allah since Adam up to Jesus. Lot was another Rasool of Allah who was assigned the areas of Jordan valley. He went there solely with the purpose of preaching the Word of God to them. The Biblical story attributing the separation between Abraham and Lot due to some quarrel between their servants taking care of their animals and paucity of the grazing pastures has no mention in the Qur'an or other Islamic traditions. Anyhow, after Abraham and Lot, Ishmael was the Rasool of Allah who spent his whole life standing before the house of the Lord at Kaaba, as a prophet priest after Abraham there. The Islamic traditions call Ishaq (Issac) as a 'Nabi' and not a Rasool, like Abraham, Noah, and Moosa, etc. while the Quran mentions Lot and Ishamael as Rasools of Allah. This shows that after Abraham and Lot, the specter of authority (i.e. the Rasalat or Nabowat) was inherited by Ishmael from his father Abraham. As against the priesthood of Ishmael, Isaasc, though a Nabi of Allah, remained domesticated in the southern Canaan at Beersheba and Hebron promoting the mission of his father there. After Ishmael, however, the scepter (prophet hood) shifted to Yaqoob (Jacob) and his descendants.

The Prophet of Islam Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in whom God finalized His ineffable and everlasting revelation was born at Makkah, started his mission as a Prophet there. He had received the final message from the Lord to worship one and the only Lord God of universe, and to obey all His commandments in the steps of all the foregoing prophets of the Lord. Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), as such, was the most befitting answer to the prayer made by Abraham at Makkah in the following words:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا
الضَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ يَهْوَى إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ

يَشْكُرُونَ

O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! that they may keep up prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful: (14:37)

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Our Lord! and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. (2: 129)

Incidentally, we note that the verse Al-Qur'an 14:37, quoted above, refers to an uncultivable or unproductive area which is essentially a wilderness, where Abraham dedicated his first born son Ishmael to stay before the ancient house of the Lord there. The second verse i.e. 2:129, contains the prayer of Abraham, which is self explanatory. God accepted the prayer graciously, and sent the promised Prophet there as foretold by Jacob, Moses, and Jesus; as we shall discuss in detail subsequently.

Who were the Writers of the Pentateuch

Traditionally, the Jews and the Christians maintain that the first five books of the Old Testament were written by Moses himself. Modern scholarship, however, does not testify the said assertion. It is now believed that the most probable date of many such writings is the later period of King David or reign of Solomon i.e. between 980 to 931 BC. Prior to that period, the Israelites remained under slavery and forced labor at the hands of the Egyptians for about 450 years and thereafter wandered another 40 years in the so-called desert of Paran. After the death of Moses at Mount Nebo, the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua got hold of a sizable part of Canaan, but they lacked effective leadership and strong hold anywhere in the region before the conquests of King David i.e. around 1,010 B.C. Prior to this period, Israelites were mostly either the illiterate shepherds or the agriculturists engaged continually in war

against the original inhabitants of Canaan. They, therefore, lacked trade and travelling experience in the world around them, and also lacked first hand reliable information as well as geographical knowledge of different regions around them. To them, all the land beyond Beer Sheba towards Aqabah and beyond Aqaba and Midian towards Havilah touching Yemen, Ethiopia, etc. was the wilderness of Paran. Keeping in view the aforesaid background, we cannot expect a better description of the region and of the events from the writers describing the same almost a thousand year after Abraham and about 400 years after the Exodus. There are some scholars who believe that the first five books of the Old Testament were written during exilic or post exilic period. **Prophet Ezra and Nehemiah played an important role in re-writing the books and reconstructing the temple** as well as the Jewish cult under Zerubbabel. If so, no accuracy can be claimed for the events and places being described far distant to their places and times of occurrence. The *Easton's Bible Dictionary* describes the situation as under:

He (Ezra) was "a ready scribe in the law of Moses," who "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." "He is," says Professor Binnie, "the first well-defined example of an order of men who have never since ceased in the church; men of sacred erudition, who devote their lives to the study of the Holy Scriptures, in order that they may be in a condition to interpret them for the instruction and edification of the church. It is significant that the earliest mention of the pulpit occurs in the history of Ezra's ministry (Neh. 8:4). He was much more of a teacher than a priest. We learn from the account of his labours in the book of Nehemiah that he was careful to have the whole people instructed in the law of Moses; and there is no reason to reject the constant tradition of the Jews which connects his name with the collecting and editing of the Old Testament canon. The final completion of the canon may have been, and probably was, the work of a later generation; but Ezra seems to have put it much into the shape in which it is still found in the Hebrew Bible. When it is added that the complete organization of the synagogue dates from this period, it will be seen that the age was emphatically one of Biblical study" (The Psalms: their History, etc.). For about fourteen years, i.e., till B.C. 445, we have no record of what went on in Jerusalem after Ezra had set in order the ecclesiastical and civil affairs of the nation. In that year another distinguished personage, Nehemiah, appears on the scene. After the ruined wall of the city had been built by

Nehemiah, there was a great gathering of the people at Jerusalem preparatory to the dedication of the wall. On the appointed day the whole population assembled, and the law was read aloud to them by Ezra and his assistants (Neh. 8:3). The remarkable scene is described in detail. There was a great religious awakening. For successive days they held solemn assemblies, confessing their sins and offering up solemn sacrifices. They kept also the feast of Tabernacles with great solemnity and joyous enthusiasm, and then renewed their national covenant to be the Lord's. Abuses were rectified, and arrangements for the temple service completed, and now nothing remained but the dedication of the walls of the city (Neh. 12).

We know that the Law of Moses or the Torah had been destroyed even earlier than the final destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem by Banuchadnezer, and **even the Jewish scholars maintain that Ezra wrote the entire Old Testament from his memory.** The authenticity of the re-written Testament is, therefore, dubious in its character, and under no circumstances one can assign the said writings to Prophet Moses.

There are numerous indications in the Bible itself suggesting that the first five books of the Old Testament were not written by Moses, as they do not reflect that Moses himself was narrating the facts in first person. Mostly, he has been referred as a third person and especially in Deuteronomy 34 narrating the events of his own death. As Moses could not have written the account of his own death, therefore, it can be presumed that such narratives were made by some unknown writers but their writings were assigned in the name of Moses to lend authenticity to the same. A perusal of verses 5 to 8 and 10 to 12 of the Genesis 34 leave no doubt about the above findings.

That these books were not written by Moses himself is also evident from the fact that they depict ignorance of Moses about the names of the kings of Egypt of his own lifetime. A few references from the Exodus may substantiate our findings given above:

(a) "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph". (Ex. 1:8). And "And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him." (Ex. 14:6)

(b) The book of Exodus is unable to name the Pharaoh when Moses was born. Instead of naming the Pharaoh, he has been referred to as "He is the one who reigned when Moses was born and upon that king the plagues were inflicted". ()

(c) Dynasty of the particular Pharaoh under whom the history of Exodus took place is unknown to the writer. He has simply been referred as the Pharaoh of the oppression.

Had Moses written the first five books, and especially the Exodus, he would not forget the names of the Pharaohs of his time as he was brought up in the royal family and knew everybody personally. Under the circumstances, only a child can assign the authorship of the first five books of The Old Testament to Moses, and modern scholars no longer believe the same. For instance, we quote: "Today, the Bible is regarded by most scholars and critics as a patchwork of legend, lore, and law that was created over a thousand years or so in distant antiquity by countless unknown chronicles and lawgivers and storytellers, collected, compiled and corrected by generation after generation of editors (or "redactors"), and canonized by the ancient rabbis only toward the end of the biblical era." ("The Harlot by the Side of the Road" by Jonathan Kirsch, Ballentine Books New York 1997, page: 315, under appendix: 'Who really wrote the Bible')

The Dark Ages in the Christendom especially the western world had ended centuries ago and Europe is now far ahead of others in respect of historical as well as geographical knowledge of the planet Earth. No truth can now be established simply on the basis that the same is narrated in the Bible as the people now demand extra biblical proofs, especially, about the facts pertaining to the history of the physical world. The facts pertaining to geographical features and history of the Middle East cannot be based on the writings of the Jews in the Bible, and the truth must prevail over the ignorance and the misconceptions of the writers of the old. Similarly, the Hijrat (flight) of Hagar and Ishmael from Canaan to Makkah and about 4000 years continuous history of their descendants cannot be overruled just by one sided statement in the Bible written by ignorant

and ill-informed compilers (not Moses or any other prophet) of the said portion.

Vitality and Impact of the Study

The determination of the exact location of Paran is extremely important firstly because it pertains to the Ishmaelite settlements in Arabia which is an established historical fact and secondly it is important for proper interpretation and understanding of two most important prophecies of Moses in the Bible. There is hardly any doubt that Moses has been admittedly the greatest prophet of Israel and his Law prevailed in Israel over a continuous period of about 1500 years. All prophets of Israel after Moses followed the said law meticulously. Even Jesus himself could not dare change even an iota from the law of Moses. Jesus said:

(17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

(18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Math. 5:17-18)

The expositors of the Bible have, however, tried to conceal or distort the aforesaid important prophecies of Prophet Moses which contained his departing message as well as final blessings for Israel. The prophecies had clearly foretold the advent of a prophet like Moses, who will be raised from the brethren of Israel (i.e Ishmaelites) who will shine forth from Mountain Paran with a fiery law in his right hand. It was further revealed that the said Prophet will be accompanied by ten thousand saints of the Lord.

It is worth noting here that the foretold Prophet was none else than Prophet Muhammad; who entered Mecca in the 8th of Hijrah, exactly as foretold in the prophecy referred here in above. The Jews and the Christian expositors of the Bible have tried in vain to conceal the aforesaid prophecies not only by concealing the true fact but also by distorting the relevant text of the Holy Book. As such, they have given wrong interpretation for location of Paran to confuse identification of the same. Further, they have intentionally presented misleading facts about the history of Arabia during the last 2000 years i.e. from the period of Abraham

to Jesus. The incorrect presentation continues till date so that the Jewish and the Christians readers in the world may not have even a glimpse of the true purport of the final and departing message as well as the prophecy of Moses left for the guidance and benefit of his followers. It is an undeniable fact that the promised Prophet, like Moses, had shone like the sun at noon from the Mountain Paran i.e. the mountains of Makkah, and effectively changed the course of history in major part of the old world by the introduction of his Fiery Law there. The kingdom of God was established on Earth and the will of God did prevail in the areas converted to Islam. Human beings in the said areas have been receiving the blessings and benefits of Islam for a continuous period of about 1,200 years. Although a sluggish attitude of the Muslims during the past few centuries obstructed the further spread of Islam temporarily, yet one can foresee a revival of the fervor in the Islamic movement and even today Islam is the fastest spreading religion in the world. The number of practicing Muslims far exceeds the number of adherents of any other religion in the world. Those who can see the facts with a naked eye cannot fail to grasp the truth. The study as under is, therefore, an attempt to set straight the record and to remove distortion of God's word or concealment thereof. It is hoped that those who submit to the will of God and follow the last Prophet, foretold by Moses and Jesus etc. will be saved; while the disbelievers shall meet the fate predicted by the said law.

References on Paran

Reverting to the study about the location of Paran, we start with a reference to a website of Bible study pertaining to wilderness of Paran which is as under:

"Paran is a desert area located in the north-eastern section of the Sinai Peninsula, with the Arabah on the east and the wilderness of Shur on the west (see Bible Places). The Israelites arrived in the wilderness of Paran after a three day journey north from Mount Sinai, as attested by its modern-day name Badiet et-Tih, meaning "the desert of the wanderings." It was from Kadesh, in Paran, that the twelve scouts were sent into the Promised Land to gather information prior to what would have been the Israelites' entry just a little more than two years after the Exodus (Numbers 10:11), but only Joshua and Caleb had the courage and faith to report that the people should go in and take the land that God was giving them. An often overlooked fact of Bible History is that

the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years not because the journey took that long to physically complete (the spies went in and returned in a matter of days), but as a death sentence for those who refused to enter the Promised Land when they first had the chance to do so. They were placed in a "holding pattern" until all of the disobedient and cowardly ones of adult age had died off (Numbers 32:10-13). Who or what they were did not save them, only those who obeyed God entered the land of God's Promise.

Earlier in Bible history, when Sarah forced Hagar to leave Abraham, she and Ishmael went to live in the wilderness of Paran, where God continued to watch over them as He promised Abraham:

Thus, the most important and departing blessing of Moses on Israel containing the prophecy about the advent of the last Prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) who had to shine forth from Mountain Paran to give the fiery law to the world has been concealed from the eye of the readers.

What has been Concealed and Why?

The 'fact finder' given at the end of the aforementioned reference about Paran needs special attention as the same is a skillful attempt to conceal the exact words of the prophecy in the Old Testament (extant today), which we shall examine as under:

"This is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death and he said:

The Lord came from Sinai and **rose up from Seir unto them.**

He shined forth from Mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: From his right hand went a fiery law for them" (Deu. 33:2)

For proper understanding of the aforesaid prophecy, the same must be read with the verses 15 to 18 of Deuteronomy 18, which are as under:

God said to Moses;

(15) The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.

(16) According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb (Mount Sinai) in the day of the assembly, saying, Let

me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

(17) And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

(18) I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

The quotations from the Bible mentioned above, clearly foretell the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was like Moses in many respects. He happened to be the only Prophet who shone forth from the Mount Paran in the company of ten thousand saints of the Lord and brought a fiery law to be followed by the people meticulously for all times to come. God put His words in his mouth and he spoke to them all that the God had commanded. God Himself certified the said fact in the following words:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

Nor does he speak out of desire. (3) It is naught but revelation that is revealed, (4) **(53:3-4)**

It is pertinent to note here that all prophets of Israel followed the law of Moses, and even Jesus did not change an iota from the said law. As such, there was no question of introduction of any fiery law, as long as the law of Moses was in practice among the Israelites. Jesus, with the guidance from the Lord, only relaxed a few hardships in the said law, but St. Paul advocated the abrogation of entire law of Moses (Law of the Lord), and in his own words, he freed his followers from the yolk or curse of the law. Hence, instead of obedience to the law of Moses, St. Paul advocated complete obedience to the law of the Roman monarchs. The law of the Lord was, therefore, extinct throughout the world. Even the Jews, in Diaspora, did not strictly abide by the same in their day to day affairs. This was high time to restore and reintroduce the fiery law of the Lord, as foretold by Moses 2000 years ahead of the time. All the followers of Moses and Jesus were, therefore, under an obligation to hearken that prophet and to obey the law of the Almighty introduced through him. Alas! Instead of bowing before the will of the Lord, our Jewish and Christian brethren continued to serve their self-interests and attractions provided by 'the religion made easy' by St. Paul and others.

As our Jewish and Christian brethren were hesitant to submit themselves to the commands of God, therefore, they left no stone unturned to confuse and conceal the prophecies of Jacob, Moses, and Jesus about the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which gave clear identification of the Lord shining forth from the Mount Paran. Traces of the truth are still available here or there in the numerous versions of the Bible, and even today one can differentiate the truth from the falsehood; genuine from the fake one. It is, therefore, necessary to conduct further studies in the matter to establish the truth.

Incidentally, we note that the writer of the aforesaid article in the website has clearly pointed out the present name of so-called Desert of Paran in the Sinai Peninsula as Badiet-Tih (i.e. desert of wanderings) and he has not named it the Wilderness of Paran. We, therefore, feel that Paran does not exist in the Sinai Peninsula, and the Jewish writers have shown Paran there only to conceal the actual dwelling places of Ishmaelites in the Wilderness of Paran i.e. Makkah region. This, perhaps, was done only to negate the advent of the promised Prophet in Arabia; because due to their prejudice against Arabs, the Israelites could not tolerate the advent of the most prominent Prophet in some nation other than Israel. They, therefore, have made every effort to show Paran in Sinai, and Jabal-e-Musa, too, in that region which is against the modern findings of the scholars of great eminence. Factually, the Paran of Genesis 21:20-21 lay beyond the Gulf of Aqaba towards Hijaz and Yemen, as we shall discuss in detail subsequently.

Prophecies of Jacob and Moses Fulfilled

The last blessings wherewith Moses blessed Israel before his death (Deu. 33:2), and the earlier prophecy (Deu. 18:15-18) were fulfilled perfectly at Mt. Paran i.e. Mecca. The immutable and final Word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم in the said region is intact and continuously spreading throughout the world.

That the Ishmaelites lived apart from the other descendents of Abraham is also correct factually because the Ishmaelites lived in various areas of Arabia around

Mecca, while descendants of Israel lived in Egypt and subsequently in Canaan.

We know that the descendants of Isaac and Jacob and even their progeny lived in Palestine, while the descendants of Esau (Edom) lived in the area known as Edom in between the Aqaba and the Dead Sea. Other descendants of Abraham by his wife Qatura settled partly around Midian and some of them towards southern part of Iraq. The descendants of Ishmael went far away to the valley of Paran i.e. present Makka and settled there apart from all other descendants of Abraham. Had Ishmael and Hagar lived in Sinai, and had Ishmael married the Egyptian girl, they would be living between Israelites, Edomites, Midianites, and the Egyptians which were all their relatives. This would disprove or falsify the biblical statement that Ishmael lived apart from all his relatives.

The Islamic history and traditions tell us that Ishmael being the first born of Abraham was dedicated to the Lord. Even according to the law of Moses, he belonged to God and had to stand before the Lord at His House at Makkah. He and his mother Hagar were, therefore, taken to Kaabah (Baitullah or Beth-el) i.e. the first and the ancient house of God on Earth. Ishmael was taken to Kaaba during his suckling period and lived there forever standing in the service of the Lord. He was fourteen years of age at Isaac's birth and at the weaning of Isaac, he must have been between seventeen to nineteen years and living at Mecca. Since Ishmael and his mother had started living at Mecca from the suckling period of Ishmael, therefore, there was no possibility that Ishmael could be present at the so called weaning of Isaac.

Ishmael's mother had died when he was only 15 years of age and he firstly married a girl named Amara Bint Saeed Bin Usama Bin Aqeel of the family of Amaliq. Subsequently, on a hint from his father, Ishmael divorced his aforesaid wife and married Syeda Bint Mizaz (or Midad) Bin Umar who belonged to Banu Jurham. He got all his sons and daughters from this second wife. Banu Jurham had always been a famous tribe of Arabia and rulers in the most of the area around Makkah. Wife of Ishmael was, therefore, essentially an Arab and not an Egyptian as reported by the Bible. Factually, Ishmael and Hagar never visited Egypt after departing from Abraham and Sarah. There is no

evidence in the history that Ishmael married an Egyptian girl. The narration of the Bible that Hagar got Ishmael married to an Egyptian girl is, therefore, obviously baseless and against the history of the Arabs. The aforesaid statement in the Genesis pertaining to Ishmael's marriage with an Egyptian girl is, therefore, simply a miss-reporting by Israel, a small faction of the descendants of Abraham, against the overwhelming majority of the Ishmaelites. The latter had been the absolute rulers of the entire land of Arabia, when the Israelites had been struggling for their freedom.

The Paran, where Ishmael and Hagar lived, was the valley of Mecca (which had also been named Paran due to the fact that there was one 'Faran Bin Ghauf from Banu Jurham who lived near Kaaba in Mecca and the valley also became known with the name Faran). It is said that Jabl-e-Ghauf of Makka is named after Ghauf (the father of aforesaid Faran). Some writers also point out that Terah (Azar, the father of Abraham) and Faran lived approximately in the same age. Sheba who established the kingdom of Sheba in present Yemen, was a son of Jurham Bin Kahtaan, son of Aabir, son of Shem Bin Noah (Quran aur Sahib-e-Quran, Bashir Ahmad Chaurhry, Maktabah Ashaat-e-Adab Anarkali, Lahore, Pakistan 1970, P. 31).

Ibne Kathir has written that Abraham took Hagar and Ishmael along with him from Canaan and reaching the Paran Mountain near Mecca, left them there. (Page: 220, Tareekh Ibne Kathir, translated by Nafees Academy, Lahore). He also tells us that throughout his life, Abraham has been visiting Mecca again and again. Allama Shibli Naumani has written that the Scholars of Geography have consensus of opinion that Faran is the name of the Mountain of Hijaz (page: 126, Seerat un Nabi I, Services Book Club Rawalpindi, 1985).

Other Scriptural Prophecies Fulfilled

Here we refer to Isaiah 41 where God says:

"Be silent and listen to me, you distant lands! Get ready to present your case in court; You will have your chance to speak. Let us come together to decide who is right.

Who was it that brought the conqueror from the east And

makes him triumphant wherever he goes? Who gives him victory over kings and nations? His sword strikes them down as if they were dust. His arrows scatter them like straw before the wind. He follows in pursuit and marches safely on, So fast that he hardly touches the ground! Who was it that made this happen? Who has determined the course of history? I, the Lord, was there at the beginning, And I, the Lord, will be there at the end.” (Isa. 41:1-4)

The above verses are good news to the distant lands to get ready to present their case. God brought his conquerer from the east who strikes down every opponent swiftly and only God determined the aforementioned course of history. Who was this man from the east? Was it Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)? Who himself succeeded to establish the rule of God over an area exceeding a million square miles, while his successors during another 90 years extended the kingdom of God to major parts of the then civilized world. To assure ourselves about the aforesaid man, we proceed further:

“I have chosen a man who lives in the east; I will bring him to attack from the north. He tramples on rulers as if they were mud, Like a potter trampling clay. (Isa. 41:25)

History tells us that a humble servant of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) i.e. Khalid Bin Walid (whom the Prophet had surnamed 'sword of Allah') defeated the Persians and thereafter in 637 AD, he defeated the Byzantine Armies at Yarmuk (northeast of Palestine). Since then the worship of one and the only God of the universe got a strong hold in Palestine banishing from there the worship of false gods and idolatry forever.

If the man coming from the East and attacking from north is not still recognizable, we refer to another prophecy in Isaiah as under:

“Here is my servant, whom I strengthen – **the one I have chosen**, with whom I am pleased.

I have filled him with my spirit, and he will bring justice to every nation.

He will not shout or raise his voice or make loud speeches in the streets. He will not break off a bent reed or put out a flickering lamp. He will bring lasting justice to all. He will not lose hope or courage; he will establish justice on the earth. Distant lands eagerly wait for his teachings.”

God created the heavens and stretched them out;

He fashioned the earth and all that lives there; He gave life and breath to all its people. And now the Lord God says to his servant, "I, the Lord, have called you and given you power **to see that justice is done on earth. through you I will make a covenant with all peoples;** through you I will bring light to the nations. (Isa. 42:1-6)

The salient features of the above verses are that the God will strengthen His servant whom He has chosen. Only Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was named 'Mustafa' (the chosen one) and only he was strengthened and filled with God's spirit to bring justice to every nation. At 'Hujat al Wida 10th Hijra, he proclaimed in the presence of about 1,24,000 companions at Hajj that:

پیغمبر اعظم و آخر: فلیس لعربی علی عجبی فضل ولا لعربی ولا لاسود

علی ابیض ولا لابیض علی اسود فضل الالبالتقوی

(ان اباکم واحد کلکم لآدم و آدم من تراب ان اکرمکم عندالله اتقیکم و لیس

لعربی علی عجبی فضل الالبالتقوی

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action.

Can we find any other example of justice to all nations of the world?! It was only Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who never lost the hope or courage and who established justice on Earth under his own supervision. It was he through whom the justice was done on Earth and with whom the covenant was made with the people of the world to last forever.

God declared emphatically that:

"I alone am the Lord your God. No other god may share my glory.; I will not let the idols share my praise. The things I predicted have now come true. Now I will tell you of new things Even before they begin to happen." (Isa. 42:8-9)

As Lord God was alone the Lord of the universe, and no other God could share His glory, therefore, our Christian brothers cannot claim that there are two more persons partners in the godhead. The God has also given the news that previous predictions are likely to become true. He says:

Sing a new song to the Lord; sing his praise, all the world ! Praise him, you that sail the sea; praise him, all creatures of the sea! **Sing, distant lands and all who live there! Let the desert and its towns praise God; let the people of Kedar praise him! Let those who live in the city of Sela shout for joy from the tops of the mountains ! Let those who live in distant lands give praise and glory to the Lord!** (Isa. 42:10-12)

The latest and newest song of the God is the Quran, the everlasting praise of God Almighty. The song is being sung all 24 hours throughout the world.

God also made His last Prophet praise-worthy as the word 'Muhammad' is itself the 'most praised one'. Praise of the Lord God and also the praise of His last Prophet spread throughout the seas, the distant lands, and the towns in the desert. The said prophet was undoubtedly a descendant of Kedar and there is no one else in the world who was the **praised one of Kedar.**

As regards 'the city of Sela', the same is Medina. Jabal Sela is at a distance of about one kilometer from Masjid Nabavi and the Tomb of the Prophet. It was Jabal Sela where the greatest enemies of the Prophet i.e. the non-believers of Mecca along with their allies, kept the Muslims besieged for about 27 days in 5th Hijrah. There were only three thousand Muslims against an army consisting of about ten to fifteen thousand men, which included the Jews from Khyber and all important Arab tribes of Hijaz. The Muslims were facing extremely critical situation, and God also described the same as follows:

O you who believe! call to mind the favor of Allah to you when there came down upon you hosts, so We sent against them a strong wind and hosts, that you saw not, and Allah is Seeing what you do. When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull, and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts of Allah. There the believers were tried and they were shaken with severe shaking. (Al-Qur'an 33:9-11)

The hosts lost some of their great heroes in individual fights against Muslims and returned unsuccessful to their homes never to return again. This was the greatest point of satisfaction and rejoicing for the Muslims after which no one ever attacked Medina i.e. the city of the prophet.

Thus, the greatest attack of the disbelievers against the believers was finally repulsed and within fine years thereafter, almost all the people in the Arabian Peninsula accepted Islam. The Prophet introduced the fiery law of the Lord in Arabia and implemented the final covenant of the Lord there. Peace and justice prevailed throughout the land, and the 'kingdom of God' was established on earth, as it was in heaven. Yet another reference in Isaiah is of great interest:

Great caravans of camels will come, from Midian and Ephah.

They will come from Sheba, bringing gold and incense
People will tell the good news of what the Lord has done!
All the sheep of Kedar and Nebaioth will be brought to you as sacrifices
And offered on the altar to please the Lord. The lord will make his Temple more glorious than ever. (Isa. 60:6-7)

We understand that Ephah was a part of Midian. The caravans of camels coming from Sheba had to give the good news of what Lord had done. This good news was for Israel and the Christians obviously to be received through the caravans of camels passing through Mecca and reaching Palestine and other areas. Kedar and Nebaioth are admittedly the two eldest sons of Ishamael who never took their sacrifices to any other place except Kaaba at Mecca to offer their sacrifices at the House of the Lord there. The Lord God made His Temple at Kaaba more glorious than ever and it continues to grow further in its glory. The people of Kedar never praised any one in the Palestine or anywhere else except Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to which reference has been made in Isaiah 42:11 as discussed earlier.

The aforementioned prophecies from the Bible do not leave any doubt that the promised Prophet (generally referred to in Bible as 'that prophet') appeared at Mt. Paran at Mecca. Sacrifices always continued to be made there at the house of the Lord, and Kaaba remains as the most glorious house of the Lord on earth. Hundreds and thousands of

worshippers continue to praise and pray before the Lord at all times during the day and night. Let our Jewish as well as Christian brothers accept the truth, which has come to light.

The Lord has clearly shown forth at Mound Paran at Makkah. And the fiery law stands established over vast areas in the world. Mountains of Makkah had been the only place on earth, where Prophet Muhammad appeared in the company of ten thousand saints (Sahabah), with no other purpose except to establish the fiery law of Lord on earth. These are bare facts recorded in the history, and no one can deny the same. Anyhow, those who disagree with the aforesaid facts and try to show the wilderness of Paran somewhere else than Makkah, let them come with the facts and figures and sound reasoning to substantiate their contention. About all such matters, the verdict of God is given as follow:

Bring forth your reasons, if at all you are truthful. (2:111)

We discussed earlier that all the area beyond Beersheba up to the Gulf of Aqabah and beyond Aqabah up to Yemen was considered the wilderness of Paran by the Israelites writing the Exodus at least 400 years later than the event. There are scholars who believe that most of the parts of the Genesis pertain to the post exilic period and perhaps written by Ezra. The Israelites had never travelled outside their own territories and had no first hand information of areas beyond Midian towards Yemen. The entire area extending beyond Aqaba and Midian was Desert of Paran to them. The said area was generally known as Arabah which is a Semitic word meaning 'the desert or wildernesses. Almost the same area is known as Hijaz in the modern times.

THE SCEPTER

Yaqoob, the Prophet of Allah, before his death, said to his sons:

"Gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall befall you in days to come." (Gen. 49:1 RSV)

After the foregoing, Jacob made predictions about his descendants which contain a very important news for Israel which we reproduce as under:

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” (Gen. 49:10)

The above prophecy and also the God’s promise (as per Deu. 18:15-18), as well as, Moses departing blessings (Deu. 33:2) have always proved a bottleneck to the Christian scholars. They have been trying either to obliterate the prophecy or to confuse the same through revised translations or commentary hiding the facts and misleading the innocent readers. To clarify the point, we reproduce hereunder another version of the aforesaid verse of the Bible from GNB, as under:

“Judah will hold the royal sceptre,
And his descendants will always rule.
Nations will bring him tribute
And bow in obedience before him” (Gen. 49:10, GNB 1980)

On comparison of the two versions of the same verse of the Genesis, as above, no one can say that they pertain to the same verse or they have been translated from the same source. The KJV belongs to year 1611 AD, while the GNB is a recent version and the latter has distorted the translation to such an extent that it does not seem to be an alternate version of Gen. 49:10. Obviously, it is one of the recent pious forgeries made by the authors of GNB to conceal the real meanings of the most important prophecy of Prophet Jacob (Israel). To dispel the obscurity, we need to re-examine the aforesaid verse as follows.

The KJV version clearly tells us that the scepter or the rod of authority as well as a **lawgiver** which means a **great prophet** imposing the law of God shall not depart from Judah, unless and until Shiloh comes. The ‘Easton’s Bible Dictionary’ defines Shiloh as the **Messiah** “the peaceful one”. The Vulgate version translates the word “**he who is to be sent**”. The New Bible Dictionary (Inter Varsity Fellowship) defines **Shiloh as a messianic title**. By emending Siloh to Selloh, means “until that which is his shall come” i.e. the things reserved for him, a vaguely messianic hope. It also has been rendered as “**until he**

comes whose it is whatever may be". Shiloh has also been defined "**the peace giver.**"

With the aforementioned meanings, it is clear that the Judaists will continue to enjoy power as well as God's blessings in the shape of His law and the prophets and they will not be deprived of the same unless and until Shiloh comes. Shiloh is obviously a messiah, the peace giver, or perhaps the comforter, or the paracletus, the advent of whom has been prophesied where after the Judaists will stand deprived of their kingdom as well as the prophethood. The Shiloh, the peace giver, or the paracletus will receive obedience and the gathering of people towards him. The RSV (1952 version) of the verse under discussion is given below:

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until he comes to whom it belongs;
And to him shall be the obedience of the people." (Gen. 49:10)

The above prophecy was fulfilled in history with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at Makka, whereafter there had never been another prophet in Israel. The worldly kingdom also stood shifted to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his successors forever. The Christian scholars have also tried to conceal the most important prophecy of Jesus about the advent of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Paracletus or the spirit of truth as referred herein below:

After Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob was chosen by God to be His prophet and as such the Israelites became a nation chosen for trial by the Lord. Thousands of prophets came to them in between Moses and Jesus, but those stubborn people never mended their ways. They rebelled against the God, refused to obey the prophets, killed and murdered many of them and have continually been worshiping the idols save only a minority on the straight path. Instead of changing their own behavior, the Israelites have been making unauthorized changes in the scripture to such an extent that it is no longer possible to differentiate the Word of God from the word of Israel. Continuous admonitions from the Lord did not change them. The test and trial of Israel culminated during the prophethood of Yahya (John, the Baptist) and Issa (Jesus). The former was executed by

Herod Antipas, and the latter was allegedly deserted by his followers and crucified by the Romans. The test and trial of the Israelites as trustees of the God's covenant reached finality after the aforesaid events with no hope of revival of righteousness in them. This was high time to depart the scepter and the ruler's staff as well as the lawgiver from among the descendants of Judah. Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to whom it all belonged, as per the prophecy of Jacob (Gen. 49:10) shown on Mt. Paran i.e. Makkah, with full brightness to illuminate the entire world, and all the people of Arabian Peninsula turned obediently towards him. Subsequently, his successors held the largest empires in the world for about 1300 years. As such, the scepter stood transferred from Israelites and Judah to the Arabian Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which means 'the most praised one' and Habakkuk, perhaps, has hinted the same as follows:

"God came from Teman,
 And the Holy One from mount Paran Selah.
 His glory covered the heavens,
 And the earth was full of his praise.
 And his brightness was as the light;
 He had horns coming out of his hand:
 And there was the hiding of his power.
 Before him went the pestilence,
 And burning coals went forth at his feet
 He stood, and measured the earth:
 He beheld, and drove asunder the nations;
 And the everlasting mountains were scattered,
 The perpetual hills did bow:
 His ways are everlasting.
 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction:
 And the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." (Hab. 3:3)

In our opinion, there was no one except Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described in the aforesaid vision.

Before arriving at a conclusion, we recount the Bible statements that Ishmael lived in the wilderness of Paran and his mother found an Egyptian wife for him. And also that Hagar and Ishmael went to the Wilderness of Paran and lived there (Gen. 21:20-21). If the said Paran was in Sinai Peninsula, then the Biblical narration stands disproved due to the fact that no Ishmaelite could ever be found living in the said Wilderness of Paran as they have always been living in Arabia for the last 3,800 years. To make the scripture true, there is no alternative except to admit that by Paran is meant the area of Hijaz and its surroundings in Arabia, the central point of which is city of Mecca, the Mt. Paran of the Biblical predictions. Anyone attempting to wriggle out of the above situation will find himself facing another impasse to prove or falsify the prophecies of Moses in Deu. 32:2 and Deu. 18:15-18. The said prophecies clearly foretold the advent of the prophet like Moses to be raised from among the brethren of Israel (i.e. Ishmaelites) who would shine forth on Mt. Paran along with 10 thousand saints, and from whose right hand will go forth a fiery law for them. In the circumstances, we should either admit that the aforementioned prophecies of Moses were incorrect as the same were never fulfilled, or alternatively, we must pinpoint the Mt. Paran in Sinai and produce a historical evidence of the fulfillment of the prophecies stated above.

Our Christian brothers will, perhaps, try to apply the aforementioned prophecies to Jesus, but the said prophecies are self explanatory and they cannot be proved just by imaginary descriptions. We will, however, appreciate if concrete and exact references are quoted from history to prove that the aforesaid prophecies pertain to someone else than Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. Comments and criticism, if any, will be welcome if the same is just, without prejudice and based on knowledge.

As stated earlier, Ishmael being the first born son of Abraham belonged to the Lord and as such, he could not claim any inheritance from his father. Being dedicated to the Lord, he was taken to Mecca, to stand before the house of the Lord for his entire life. He belonged to God and God was with him, as also confirmed by the Bible. This shows that Ishmael was neither an outcast, nor perhaps, sent away merely on the desire of Sarah, as claimed by the Israelites. Ishmael was, in fact, the first born son of

Abraham dedicated to the Lord and he stood before the house of Lord at Mecca continuously from his childhood till his death, and on his death he was buried in Hateem i.e. in Kaaba. We, therefore, conclude that the dwelling place of Hagar, Ishmael, and their descendents was actually the valley of Mecca (Paran of the Bible) and they never lived in the so-called wilderness of Paran in Sinai.

The last blessing of Moses to Israel containing prophecy about the Lord shining forth from Mount Paran is given hereunder again for ready reference:

“This is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death and he said:

The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them.

He shined forth from Mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: From his right hand went a fiery law for them” (Deu. 33:2)

It is clear from the above that after coming from Sinai (i.e. the place of law giving to Moses) God rose up from Seir (i.e. the mountain range where Jesus preached). He shone forth from Mount Paran (i.e. Mecca, where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) shone forth with full brightness in 8th hijrah) and he entered the aforesaid city triumphantly along with ten thousand saints and a fiery and eternal law for the world. The truth stands established without any doubt for all the righteous people in the world seeking their salvation with the God. To us, it makes no difference whether the Israelites accept the same or deny the clear cut final prophecy of Prophet Moses as referred to above. If they have any proof against our findings mentioned here in above, they are welcome to produce historical facts in support of their contention that the Ishmaelites lived in Sinai. Similarly, they are also required to comment whether the final prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 33:2 was true or false one. If they declare aforesaid prophecy as true, then they must mention the fulfillment thereof showing **the promised one shining forth from Mount Paran with 10 thousand saints and a fiery law going forth from his right hand**. If they fail to find anyone else than Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) actually fulfilling the final prophecy of Moses in toto and even thereafter they continue denying him that they will have to account for the same before the

Lord God (Jehovah, Elohim, or Allah by whatever good name one may address Him) on the day of the Judgment.

Even the following references from the Bible suggest that the desert of Paran perhaps extended beyond the Gulf of Aqabah and the Midian region, which shows it in present Hijaz, (province of Saudi Arabia).

Regarding Haddad it is said

“They left Midian and went to Paran, where some other men joined them. Then they traveled to Egypt and went to King (1-King-11-8)

Regarding death of Samuel, it is said:

“At this David went to the wilderness of Paran, there was a man of the

Clan of Caleb named Nabal.....(1-Sam-25-12)

PRAYER PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT

Abraham's Devotion to Allah

We shall recall that the Genesis contained the statement as under:

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran. (Gen. 11:31-32 KJV)

The narration, as above, tells us that it was Terah, the father of Abraham, who actually took the initiative to leave Ur for Haran, for the reasons not known to the writer. Terah took his son Abraham, his daughter-in-law, and his grand son Lut along with him . Originally they had Canaan as their destination but they somehow stayed halfway at Haran where Terah died at the age of 205. Ignoring obvious discrepancies in the aforesaid narration presently, we proceed further and find the very next verse informing us that:

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: (Gen. 12:1 KJV)

The second statement is perhaps from Elohim source, due to which it conflicts with the contents of the verses Gen. 11:31-32, as quoted above. Anyhow, we observe that the Bible gives us no information about the early life of Abraham or about his efforts to preach faith at Ur. It is also silent also about Abraham's debate with his father, feud with the people, and the confrontation with the king of Ur which ultimately compelled him to leave his home and the people for some other place in the hope to find a better atmosphere for his mission there. The Qur'an, on the other hand, gives us the actual background of the episode which precipitated the departure of Abraham from Ur. We have already discussed the same in full length under the topic

Abraham and the Covenant. It will suffice to restate here that Abraham had to leave his home, his father, and his people due to their ever-increasing animosity against Abraham who opposed the idolatry and preached worship of one and the only God of the universe. Ultimately finding no positive potentials at Ur, Abraham had to leave his home and move from place to place to preach the word of God there. He therefore left his homeland along with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lut, because the people of Ur refused to tolerate him any longer among them. It was therefore necessary for Abraham to go somewhere else in search of a better climate for preaching the word of God. The Qur'an reveals the same in the following words :

So naught was the answer of (Abraham's) people except that they said: "**Slay him or burn him.**" But Allah did save him from the Fire. Verily in this are Signs for people who believe. And he said: "For you, ye have taken (for worship) idols besides Allah, out of mutual love and regard between yourselves in this life; but on the Day of Judgment ye shall disown each other and curse each other: and your abode will be the Fire, and ye shall have none to help." **But Lut had faith in Him: He said: "I will leave home for the sake of my Lord: for He is Exalted in Might, and Wise."** (Al-Qur'an, 029.024-026 (Al-Ankaboot))

In addition to the above, the devotion of Abraham to the Lord and his longing for a righteous son to assist him during his life and to continue promotion of his faith after him is evident from the following:

He (Abraham) said: "Worship ye that which ye have (yourselves) carved? "But Allah has created you and your handwork!" They said, "Build him a furnace, and throw him into the blazing fire!" (This failing), they then sought a stratagem against him, but We made them the ones most humiliated! He said: "**I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!"**"(Al-Qur'an, 037.095-100 (As-Saaffat))

This shows that Abraham did not leave Ur, either to get numerous descendants or to hold the land of Canaan as alleged in the Genesis. The actual reason for Abraham's leaving Ur for the land of Canaan was therefore the ever increasing animosity between him and his people and lack of hope of any improvement there in the near future. Under the circumstances it was advisable for Abraham to leave his home, his father, and the people in search of a place more suitable for his mission i.e. for preaching the word of Lord

there. Abraham, therefore, left Ur with full faith in the Lord that He would direct him to some place with better potentials for continuing his mission there. Since he was childless at the age of 60, therefore, it was natural for him to pray to the Lord for the grant of a righteous son who could assist him in his old age mission, and also to promote his faith after him. The scriptures as well as the Islamic traditions tell us that the Lord did not disappoint him. Besides guiding him to various places such as Haran, Canaan, Egypt, Makkah, and perhaps Yemen, the Lord also granted Abraham a son, Ishmael who was the most befitting answer to his prayer. The name Ishmael (God has heard), as such, remains a self evident proof that he, in fact, was the answer to the entreaty of Abraham.

Blessings on Abraham in the Genesis

Referring to the blessings on Abraham, we quote from the Genesis, where the Lord says:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.
(Gen. 12:2-3 KJV)

For a proper understanding of the blessings, as above, we may split the same into four parts:

The Lord says to Abraham that:

'I will make of thee a great nation'.

'I will bless thee, and make thy name great'.

.Thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee'.

In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed'.

Fulfillment of the blessings

A) I will make of thee a great nation

In this respect we note that the great nation, promised by the Lord, were undoubtedly the descendants of Ishmael,

who have always been the major and the mighty branch among all the descendants of Abraham. The promised greatness, in fact, pertains to the descendants of Ishmael and the Genesis, too, confirms the same, because God said to Hagar:

Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for **I will make him a great nation.** (Gen. 21:18 KJV)

Yet another confirmation about the great nation, we find, where the Lord promises to Abraham that:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will **multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget,** and **I will make him a great nation.** (Gen 17:20 KJV)

We therefore find that even in the ancient times, the Ishmaelites have always been independent sovereigns in their lands throughout the Arabian Peninsula, as the Lord Himself promised twelve princes as descendants of Hagar and Ishmael. After the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the descendants and successors of Ishmael built up the greatest empire in the world the like of which had never been seen before them. They have never been slaves to any nation nor did they remain oppressed by anyone in the world. As against this, the history of Israel is a story of their continual slavery and oppression or a long and continued struggle for their independence or to possess a land of their own. Characteristically, the Israelites had been a stubborn nation, rebelling against the commandment of the Lord again and again, due to which they were afflicted with severe punishments and operations as narrated in the Bible. We therefore find no evidence for the greatness of Israelites who remained enslaved, oppressed, homeless, and dispersed among various nations of the world for major part of their existence.

History also testifies the fulfillment of the assurance of a great nation in the descendants of Ishmael, who have been holding lands hundred times more than those ever held by Israel in the Arabian Peninsula. Even outside the Arabian Peninsula, the descendants of Ishmael enjoyed sovereignty over substantial parts of the earth. They actually possess all the lands ever touched by the feet of Abraham. In addition to that, the Ishmaelites have been ruling over all the countries surrounding the areas visited by Abraham. As regards the number of descendants, we assess that the

Ishmaelites exceeded perhaps more than 10 times, the total number of the Israelites at any moment throughout the period of their existence. This is how the Lord fulfilled His promise of multiplying Ishmael exceedingly.

Reverting to the possession of the land of Canaan and Palestine, we may note that except for a short period of about a hundred years, the Israelites never enjoyed complete sovereignty or even trouble free possession of the same. Even the Bible testifies the fact that for the major period of their existence, the Israelites had been under the mercy of other nations around them. Even at the height of their glory i.e. the reign of David and Solomon, the possessions of Israel hardly exceeded about 30,000 sq. miles, while they never had any sway over Gaza and adjoining regions on the shore of the Mediterranean. As compared with this, the Muslims, i.e. the actual or spiritual successors of Ishmael, held the entire region for about 1300 years; since the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This shows that even the promise pertaining to the land of Canaan has actually been fulfilled more in the Ishmaelites than in the Israelites.

B) I will Bless Thee and Make Thy Name Great

No doubt that the Lord blessed Abraham in many ways. Abraham has the largest number of his descendants, as compared with any other person in the history of mankind. His followers i.e. the people of the book, hold about three-fourth of the entire surface of the land. As for spiritual blessings, Abraham was made Imam-un-Naas (i.e. the leader of mankind), and no one else can compete with him in that respect. Ishmael was the first born of Abraham. He was the dedicated one, and the only descendant of Abraham who actually participated with him in the covenant of circumcision with the Lord (Gen. 17:23). The Lord had said 'that my covenant with you is everlasting' (Gen. 17:13b). This everlasting covenant, however, could not be preserved in its original language or its contents by the Israelites. Over the ages, they had lost the covenant of Abraham entirely while they also made many

concealments, interpolations, additions, and distortions in the covenant of Moses ratified with them subsequently.

The essence of the covenant of Moses was the absolute oneness of the Lord God of the universe and it stipulated strict obedience to all the commandments of the Lord, following the footsteps of the prophets of Israel. In due course, the Israelites themselves distorted the covenant while their successors i.e. the Christians, took a sharp diversion even from the central theme and faith of the covenant of the Lord. They replaced the covenant of Moses with the new theology introduced by St. Paul, St. John, which stood authenticated by Constantine and other despots of Rome. Since the original contents of the covenant had become obscure over the ages, therefore, the Lord God was pleased to make a fresh and final covenant with the mankind through Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which is intact in its original form, language, and contents till today. This final covenant is likely to last forever due to the fact that the Lord took on Himself to protect it for all times to come. It is therefore a great sign of the Lord that there occurred no change of a single word, dash, or dot in the Qur'an since its revelation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over more than 1400 years have elapsed since its ratification at Makkah. This final covenant therefore remains the code of conduct for the Muslims throughout the world, and they continue to observe the same in all walks of their life.

We also observe that the Jews retained hardly anything from the covenant of Abraham, except monotheism and the ritual of the circumcision as permanent features of their cult. Rest of the covenant had been lost or forgotten. The covenant of Moses also stood distorted due to many concealments, innovations, and addition of spurious material in the same. After the advent of Jesus and dispersal of Israel throughout the nations of the world, even the Jews have been acting upon only the selected parts of the said covenant. Anyhow, the rite of circumcision was always retained by them. So far as the Christians are concerned, they declared themselves free from the Law of the Lord because St. Paul introduced a new and fanciful formula of salvation, based on belief in the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus, which also declared freedom from the Law of Moses. They too therefore drifted away from the

covenant of Moses which had been even the faith of Jesus till his death/ascension.

As regards the Arab branch of the descendants of Abraham, we note that the Lord made Ishmael a Nabi and Rasul for Arabia and other lands even during the life of Abraham, whereas Isaac was only a Nabi and not a Rasul, even after the death of his father. The first Rasul among the Israelites after Abraham was Moses, and no one else. In spite of the fact that the Israelites have made many interpolations in the Bible such as the verse Gen. 17:21, yet we find that after the everlasting covenant of Abraham (Gen. 17:13b), no covenant was ever made with Isaac who had his representation only through Abraham, his father, and his brother Ishmael, the main participants in the covenant of the circumcision. Subsequently, however, the Lord made some Testament with Jacob, but formalized His elaborate covenants only with Moses which had to be followed by Israel for all times to come. Ultimately, after the death/ascension of Jesus, there was no prophet in Israel and the sceptre of authority as well as the Law-giver departed from Judah to be raised from among the Ishmaelite with the final and the everlasting covenant for mankind in the world. **As such, all people of the Book must follow the said prophet who was foretold continuously since Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus and the Israelites were waiting for him eagerly for centuries together.** Perhaps, the only reason for Israel to reject the said prophet was their prejudice against other nations and their belief that there could be no guidance except from Jerusalem. They held the view that they were only favored people of the Lord and no prophet could be raised except from among Israel. The religions of the Book must, in fact, follow the faith of Abraham, who happens to be the greatest leader in faith, besides being the noblest personality in the world.

C) Thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee

Although the Bible has clearly stressed the importance of Abraham as a blessing for mankind, yet we find that the Israelites, as well as, the Christians never took the word of Lord seriously. Consequently, they never sent any blessings on Abraham. Instead of blessings, they have, in fact, blemished the nobility of Abraham by false allegations against him, such as detailed below:

a) It is stated that Abraham told his wife to tell the Egyptians that she was the sister of Abraham. Ostensibly, he did so due to the fear that Egyptians might kill him to get his wife Sarah. Both Sarah and Abraham are therefore alleged to have deceived the king of Egypt. They told lies and through false representation, they received flocks of sheep, goats, cattle, donkey, and slaves from the king in exchange for the despicable ignominy alleged to them. It is further narrated that on knowing the actual position, the king rebuked Abraham severely and put him out of the country in a disgraceful manner (Gen. 12:10-20).

b) The Genesis also makes us believe that Abraham was once again eager to lend his wife to, now, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, due to fear and also perhaps to get more sheep, cattle, slaves, and a thousand pieces of silver from him. Even at this time, Abraham allegedly declared 'that his wife Sarah was his sister' (Gen. 20:1-16). This depicts Abraham and Sarah as cheaters, deceivers, liars, timid, and greedy persons instead of the noblest and most virtuous personalities in the history of the mankind.

c) Abraham has elsewhere been depicted as cruel, unjust, and transgressor of the Law of the Lord, specifically as regards his alleged treatment with his faithful wife Hagar and his first born Ishmael. The blame has also been put on Sarah for the same (Gen. 16:6, 21:9-16). To support the said concoction, the scribes also managed a Commandment from the Lord as under:

But God said to Abraham, "Don't be worried about the boy and your slave Hagar. **Do whatever Sarah tells you,** because it is through Isaac that you will have the descendants I have promised. (Gen. 21:12GNB)

The obvious interpolations made by Israel show that they did not care much for the Law of the Lord. They also failed to discharge their obligations as the trustees of the

covenant of the Lord. Although it was their primary duty to keep the covenant intact and preserve the same for all times to come, yet they very often found it convenient to justify their transgressions by introducing false commandments in the name of God, which contradicted the normal and established Law of the Lord. As a nation chosen for the test and trial by the Lord, the Israelites were supposed to surrender their will before the will of the Lord to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Contrary to this, the Bible itself bears a witness that the Israelites failed on both the accounts. They committed flagrant violations of the Law of the Lord repeatedly only to serve their own interest. Thus, instead of changing themselves to conform to the Law of the Lord, the Israeli scribes found it convenient to make the Law conform to their transgressions. One out of such instances can be quoted from the Exodus where the Lord Himself colludes with the Israelites to induce and encourage immoralities and falsehood, in the nascent nation:

Exo 3:21 "I will make the Egyptians respect you so that when my people leave, they will not go empty-handed. Exo 3:22 Every Israelite woman will go to her Egyptian neighbors and to any Egyptian woman living in her house and will ask for clothing and for gold and silver jewelry. The Israelites will put these things on their sons and daughters and carry away the wealth of the Egyptians." (Exo. 3:21-22 GNB)

The advice of the Lord, as above, was reportedly conveyed through Moses, the greatest prophet of Israel, while the outcome of the plot was recorded in the following words:

Exo 12:35 The Israelites had done as Moses had said, and had asked the Egyptians for gold and silver jewelry and for clothes. Exo 12:36 The LORD made the Egyptians respect the people and give them what they asked for. In this way the Israelites carried away the wealth of the Egyptians. (Exo. 12:35-36 GNB)

Look how convenient has it been for the Israeli scribes to cover the criminal breach of trust and to justify their nefarious deeds by invoking a false commandment in the name of the Lord. We, however, feel that no sane person can imagine that the Lord will Himself suggest the believers to transgress the limits of His Law. We also believe that the Lord cannot patronize any indecency or immorality as

suggested above. Needles to comment that no prophet can ever teach the unethical and wicked acts of falsehood and deception to deprive other people from their gold and ornaments. Similarly, no sane person can ever imagine that the so-called people of the Lord happened to be corrupt, vicious, and villainous right from the time they were taking birth as a nation in the world. To believe that such inequities were suggested by the Lord Himself through Moses, is also highly blasphemous statement against the Lord as well as against the greatest prophet of Israel. It would therefore be in the fitness of the things to expunge all such rubbish from the Holy Book.

Similarly, the commandment to obey Sarah in flagrant violation of the Law of the Lord (Gen. 21:12b), cannot be upheld in any case. Sending away Hagar and Ishmael in the way described in the Genesis merely to deprive Ishmael of his birthright depicts Abraham as transgressor of the Law as well as of the norms of Justice. Aside from callousness, it is against the natural love and affection of Abraham towards his faithful wife and the son who was granted by the Lord as an answer to the life-long prayers of Abraham in the old age. The allegations, as above, in any case spoil the image of humanity and righteousness of Abraham and Sarah, and do not match with the piety and the sagacity of the patriarch and his wife. Such aspersions also spoil the image of the Holy Book which is supposed to be a beacon of light to uplift morality of the world.

d) Yet another blot on Abraham is found in the Genesis where he has been shown as husband of his own sister:

And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. **And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother;** and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. (Gen. 20:11-13 KJV)

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul

shall live because of thee. (Gen. 12:12-13 KJV)

The blemish, as above, disfigures the most illustrious and noble personality of Abraham. Besides this, it also contradicts the contents of Genesis 11:31 where Sarah has been explicitly mentioned as the daughter-in-law and not the daughter of Terah as alleged in Gen. 20:11-13 quoted above. The allegation, as above, also inflicts a curse on Abraham as per Law of the Lord stated below:

Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. (Deu 27:22 KJV)

The Muslims, however, feel that all such statements are nothing except a distortion of the facts to justify similar misdeeds of the Israelites. Thus, instead of sending any blessings on Abraham, they have factually cursed him repeatedly. Consequently, in response to their curse on Abraham, the Israelites invoked the curse of the Lord as predicted in Gen. 12:2-3, and stood deprived from the blessings of the Lord forever.

As for the separation of Ishmael from the family, we must keep in mind that being the first born of Abraham, Ishmael was dedicated to the Lord. Abraham therefore sent him along with his mother to Kaaba since his suckling period. As such, Ishmael stood already separated from his family, even before the birth of Isaac, excluding any possibility of his presence on the weaning ceremony as alleged by the Genesis. On account of his dedication to the Lord, Ishmael could not claim any inheritance from Abraham, as the Lord God was the sole inheritance for the dedicated one. As such, there was no question of Ishmael's claiming in the inheritance from Abraham. In case, Ishmael or his descendants had any claim in the said inheritance, the same would remain a bone of contention between the Israelites and the Ishmaelites for a long time. As there is no trace of any feud between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, therefore, the reason behind separation of Ishmael from the family was only his dedication to the Lord, and not the matter of inheritance as alleged by the Bible.

The internal evidence from the Bible, in fact, shows that Isaac and Ishmael had pleasant relations between

themselves and there was no rift in the family till the death of Abraham. This is evident from the following:

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. **And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah,** in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; (Gen. 25:8-9 KJV)

The Bible also tells us that Ishmael dwelt in presence of all his brethren (Gen. 16:10-12), and he also died in the presence of all his brethren (Gen. 25:18). Subsequently, Esau, the brother of Jacob, married the daughter of Ishmael (Gen. 28:9, 36:3). All this shows that up to the time of Esau and Jacob, there was no schism between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac, and perhaps they might have been visiting each other frequently. Since no contention of inheritance is traceable in the Bible or in the history and traditions of the Arabs, therefore, we can safely conclude that the fiction of sending Ishmael away to deprive him from the inheritance is just an innovation of the Jewish scribes without any evidence to support the same. Such baseless assertions suggest either the total ignorance of the writers of the Genesis or the same was a wilful distortion by the scribes. In any case, it puts a blemish on the glorious characters of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael which is just like a curse on them. This, perhaps, may be a reason among others that the Lord cursed Israel for their misdeeds including their false accusations against Abraham and his family. Actual events therefore do not suggest any disunity among the descendants of Abraham for a long time.

Since Kaaba was built by Abraham, therefore, it must have remained the temple for all his descendants up to the reign of Solomon, because there is no trace of any other temple before the temple was built at Jerusalem. Moses, during the Exodus, therefore, continued to face towards the south i.e. towards Kaaba, while offering all his sacrifices at the Tabernacle in the wilderness. This was done in accordance with the commandments of the Lord (Ex. 40:21-25). The tradition of facing towards Kaaba was maintained even subsequently at the temples constructed by Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod at Jerusalem, wherein the priests used to face towards south i.e. towards Kaaba, while sacrificing all their animals at the altar (The Jewish

Encyclopedia, Map at pp. 94-95, Vol. XII, under heading Temple Plan-Temple in Rabbinical Literature. Reference may also be made to the entry under the Temple Service 38 The Preliminaries, at pp. 49-52 vol. IV of Encyclopedia Biblica, Watts & Co. London 1899).

In view of the above, we feel that there was no conspicuous dichotomy or animosity between the Ishmaelites and the Israelites even till the periods of Ezra and Zerubbabel, but later on due to certain quarrels with the Arabs and the Nabataeans, the Israelites developed a grudge against the Ishmaelites, like their grudge against all other nations living around them.

We may also note here the striking difference between the narrations regarding Abraham in the Bible as compared with those in the Qur'an. The Bible has stressed mostly on the worldly interests and engagements of Abraham. He is also depicted as a wavering person even in respect of his faith. At times, the Bible depicts him as a selfless, brave, and powerful sheikh; while on others, he is shown as a timid, liar, deceiver and a greedy person interested only in amassing wealth at any cost whatsoever. The Bible even narrates certain events which are reflective of infirmity of faith in Abraham. It suggests us that even God moved Abraham from Haran to Canaan on the allurements of numerous descendants to possess the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1-2, Gen. 13:14-18, and Gen. 17:8). The Qur'an, on the other hand, makes no reference to any worldly interests or pursuits of Abraham. It makes no reference to his riches or his lust for sheep, goats, gold or silver, or any craving for numerous descendants to possess the land of Canaan. Abraham of the Qur'an was simply a humble devotee of the Lord who served the Lord as an ideal role-model for all the people of the world. Abraham was, in fact, a paragon of virtue blessed by the Lord abundantly. He never prayed for any land or wealth for him or his progeny. He was a sage and saint of the highest eminence chosen by the Lord to be the *امام الناس* i.e. leader of the mankind. The Qur'an has, therefore, made repeated reference to his selfless but strenuous efforts to preach faith in one and the only Lord God of the universe. All his prayers also relate to the preaching of the word of Lord on earth. Pursuits of

Abraham therefore reflect his concern to guide the human beings towards the Lord and to make them obey all the commandments of the Lord. He himself was a perfect model of absolute obedience to the will of the Lord and his prayers beseech forgiveness and salvation from Him. Here is an example of Abraham's prayers which has also been adopted by all the Muslims in the world, and they end their prayers with the same:

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ - رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ
وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

O my Lord! make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring O our Lord! and accept Thou my Prayer. "O our Lord! cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness - me, my parents, and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established! (Al-Qur'an, 014.040-041 (Ibrahim))

The Muslims usually repeat the afore-stated words in their mandatory as well as additional prayers every day to receive blessings of the Lord as promised to them. Anyhow, the evil-doers in the progeny of Abraham were not covered by the prayer, and the Lord excluded them specifically as quoted below:

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ
ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "**And also (Imams) from my offspring!**" He answered: "**But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.**" Al-Qur'an, 002.124 (Al-Baqara [The Cow])

The verse quoted above gives us a certification that Abraham fulfilled all the commandments of the Lord, due to which the Lord gave Abraham the good news of making him **the leader of entire mankind**. Abraham, at this, hastened to put his humble submission for making 'Imams' (leaders) also from his offspring. The reply of the Lord was that '**My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.**' This shows that only those descendants of Abraham will be made leaders of people who happen to be righteous and those who obey the commandments of the Lord. Others, be

it the Israelites, the Ishmaelites, or others; are not covered by the promise of the Lord.

It is obvious that the good news of exaltation as امام الناس (leader of mankind) was a pleasant surprise to Abraham. In his excitement, it was quite natural for him to respond to the same instantly with a longing for similar beneficence for his descendants. Abraham therefore pleaded spontaneously for the same. His response was in the manner of an exclamation, when he uttered the words 'و من ذريتي'. This reflects a craving underneath a question. The Lord therefore clarified to him that His promise was not within the reach of the evil-doers. The prayer was therefore accepted conditionally, and there were thousands of prophets who became the leaders among Israel within the sphere limited both by time and space. The Israelites, however, continued to disobey the Lord and to persecute the prophets. Eventually, they assassinated John the Baptist and allegedly crucified Jesus the Christ. This came as the ultimate proof of the unending evil deeds, which brought the Israel an end to the long continued line of prophets among them.

Finally, after the failure of Israel in the afore-stated test and trial, the Lord turned to the main branch of the descendants of Abraham in Arabia and fulfilled His promise of sending a prophet there in response to the prayer of Abraham (Al-Qur'an 2:129). The Lord therefore raised His last prophet from the descendants of Ishmael at Makkah. Incidentally, we note that the Lord did not introduce Himself as the Lord God of Israel there. The preamble of the Qur'an therefore started with the verse

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;
Al-Qur'an, 001.002 (Al-Fatiha [The Opening])

Instead of the limited concept of the God of Israel, the Lord God revealed Himself as the Lord God of the entire universe. The Qur'an therefore introduced Abraham as امام الناس (the leader of mankind) and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a mercy for all the people of the world.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

021.107 We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures.

Al-Qur'an, 021.107 (Al-Anbiya [The Prophets])

The Holy Prophet was further directed to declare that:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا

007.158 Say: "O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, ... (Al-Qur'an, 007.158 (Al-Araf)

The advent of the Holy Prophet therefore dispelled the wrong notion that the God was only the God of Israel and denied their monopoly over the Lord or the covenant. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), therefore, was the prophet for all the people of the world and the final covenant, ratified through him, had universal application for all times to come. All human beings were equal before the Lord and no one had any priority over the other except on the basis of his obedience to the Lord. The Lord therefore said:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

Al-Qur'an, 049.013 (Al-Hujraat [The Private Apartments, The Inner Apartments])

The craving of Abraham was therefore responded by the Lord graciously by sending the final and the greatest among the prophets to Arabia with His final and immutable covenant for mankind to persist forever.

In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed

This part of the verse suggests that after the advent of Abraham, all the nations of the world would receive their blessings through him. It was due to the fact that God had exalted Abraham as Imam-un-Nas, as stated earlier. Anyhow, the blessings through Abraham pertained only to those who follow in the righteous footsteps of the patriarch,

while the evil doers even if they be the direct descendants of Abraham were not covered by the promise of the Lord (Al-Qur'an 2:124). This also becomes a permanent criterion for all the people of the Book and they must assess as to what extent they follow the righteous conduct of Abraham and how much blessings they send on him to be responded by the promised blessings of the Lord. As for the Muslims, it is mandatory on them to follow the pure religion of monotheism, traditions, and faith of Abraham, taking him as an excellent role-model for the righteousness. God says:

Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you: for Allah sees well all that ye do. **There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him, ...** (Al-Qur'an, 060.003-004 (Al-Mumtahina))

As regards the faith and traditions of Abraham, the same have been discussed in some detail earlier showing also that the Muslims throughout the world are obliged to follow the same. The Muslims always continue to send blessings on Abraham and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during their mandatory as well as additional prayers and also on several other occasions everyday. In response, they feel assured that the Lord, too, fulfills His promise of blessing those who bless Abraham wholeheartedly. In view of the above, we conclude that the Muslims are the only people among the people of the Book who are factually the best recipients of the blessings promised as per Gen. 12:2-3.

Israelites were the First to be Put to Test

History tells us that after Lut, Ishmael, and Shuaib (i.e. Jethro), the Israelites were the first to be put to the test and trial by the Lord, and aside from the covenant of the Lord with them, they also had the unique privilege of a chain of prophets raised from their own tribe. This was a great blessing on Israel and the Lord God reminded them of His special favor in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا إِسْرَائِيلُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

O Children of Israel! call to mind the special favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all others (for My Message). (Al-Qur'an, 002.122 (Al-Baqara))

It is, however, on record that the Israelites turned out as stubborn and rebellious people, who failed to fulfill the trust (through the covenant) reposed by the Lord in them. They concealed the revelations, made interpolations or distortions therein and openly violated the commandments of the Lord again and again. Due to the afore-stated conduct of Israel, the Lord inflicted several punishments on them during the course of their history, and eventually they were cursed and deserted by the Lord (Isa. 8;16-17). Ultimately, the Lord's special favor, i.e. the sceptre of authority, and the Law-giver departed from them forever as fore-told by Jacob about 2,300 years before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Arabia (Gen. 49:10). A curse was also pronounced by Jesus on them unambiguously as under:

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (Mat. 21:43 KJV)

No one can deny the fact that the Kingdom of God was eventually taken from Israel and given to the Ishmaelites, who brought plentiful fruits thereof. They took pains to keep the covenant of the Lord intact and also abided by the same meticulously. The worship of gods other than the Lord God of the universe stood banned forever. No partners have ever been assigned with the Lord while the idols stood smashed and despised once for all.

PRAYERS OF ABRAHAM AS PER THE QUR'AN

As stated earlier, we find no match with Abraham in the history of faith as regards the efforts made by him to guide human beings to the worship of Allah. Starting at Ur, he made concerted efforts to guide the sinful nation towards the worship of one and the only Lord God of the universe. In the face of bitter opposition to his mission there, he had to leave Ur to visit many places on his way to Haran. We have reasons to believe that wherever he went he did his best to call the people towards the Lord and to advise them to abstain from the worship of the false deities invented by them. His stay at Haran or Canaan and his visit to Egypt had the same end in view. It is on record that Abraham constructed altars at Shechem and in between Aye and Bethel in Canaan and also made repeated visits to Makkah and raised the walls of Kaaba there. This was the first and the ancient House of the Lord and also the only temple of all the descendants of Abraham on earth till the construction of the Temple by Solomon at Jerusalem. Abraham dedicated his first born Ishmael along with his mother to the service of the Lord. At Kaaba, Abraham also introduced the rituals of worship as per guidance from the Lord, as we discussed earlier in some detail. It is worth-noting here that most of the traditions and rituals of Abraham exist in the same form with the Muslims throughout the world till today.

Proceeding further, we find that aside from the fact that Abraham exerted too much for the promotion of His faith. He, after leaving Ishmael and Hagar in the wilderness near Kaaba, expressed his concern about his mission in the following manner:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا
الطَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَشْكُرُونَ

O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a

valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! that they may keep up prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful: (14:37)

The verse as above shows that Abraham had settled some of his offspring near the sacred house of the Lord solely with the purpose **that they might keep up the prayer there**. Abraham also prayed to Allah that He might make the hearts of some people yearn towards them, and also that the Lord might kindly provide them with the fruits of all kinds, **so that they might be thankful to Him**. As fulfillment of the prayer, we find that the Lord had been providing the people of Makkah with all types of fruits plentifully throughout the year. It is also note-worthy that other people in Arabia treated the Ishmaelites and the believers in Abraham with love and respect and they had never been facing any resistance or animosity from other people already living in Arabia. In contrast to the above, the Israelites never enjoyed any friendship, love, or respect from other people or nations living around them. This therefore depicts perfect fulfillment of the prayer of Abraham in favor of the Ishmaelites in contrast to repeated turmoil and trouble faced by Israel from the people living around them.

Subsequently, after the episode of sacrifice of Ishmael at Kaaba, Abraham again made a prayer as we find recorded in three verses of the Qur'an i.e. 2:126-129. The first verse was the following:

1)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ
الْمَصِيرُ

And remember Abraham said: "**My Lord, make this a City of Peace**, and **feed its people with fruits**,-such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea), and such as reject Faith,-for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire,- an evil destination (indeed)!" (Al-Qur'an, 002.126 (Al-Baqara)

The prayer contained two special requests. One that the Lord may make the vicinity of Kaaba as a city of peace.

History is a witness to the fact that the place was made a city (Makkah) and also a peaceful one, the like of which is not known to the world till today. The second part of the prayer was to feed the people of the city with fruits. Although Abraham had made his prayer specifically for those who believe in Allah or the Last Day, but **Allah said that He would grant pleasure in the worldly life even to those who were disbelievers, but eventually they will be driven to the torment of fire in the life hereafter.** One is therefore astonished to observe that although Makkah has always been a land without any cultivation whatsoever, yet the Lord kept up His promise of providing the people of Makkah with all kinds of the fruits throughout the year. No other place in the wilderness, like Makkah, has the availability of sufficient fruit throughout the year. The prophecy therefore stands fulfilled perfectly.

The prayer continues as under:

(2)

وَأَذِّنْ فِى ذُرِّيَّتِهِ إِبرَاهِيمَ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ
الْعَلِيمُ

And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. Al-Qur'an, 002.127 (Al-Baqara)

This verse shows that while raising the walls of the house of the Lord, Abraham humbly prayed to the Lord:

a) That **the Lord might accept the service of the construction of walls of Kaaba from Abraham and Ishmael.** As regards the fulfillment, we note that the prayer was responded by the gracious acceptance from the Lord for all times since construction of the walls of Kaaba by Abraham. Even today tens of millions of people visit Kaaba each year and offer their sacrifices, prayers, and other rituals to worship Allah there.

b) That **the Lord might make the progeny of Abraham and Ishmael as Muslims** bowing to the will of the Lord. The fulfillment is evident and needs no further comments.

c) The third part of the prayer was the request that **the Lord might show the rites and the place of worship to them**. We therefore note that the Lord provided detailed guidance in that respect to their successors in faith i.e. Muslims, who continue to worship at Makkah and throughout the world in accordance with the guidance provided by the Lord.

d) The fourth part of the prayer was that **the Lord might turn to Abraham, Ishmael, and to their progeny in mercy** and with bounteous blessings from Him. This prayer has also been accepted by the Lord in the manner that the Lord has always been showering his blessings on the descendants / successors of Ishmael throughout the history and the people have utmost reliance in mercy and forgiveness of the Lord.

The prayer continues in the following words:

(3)

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

"Our Lord! make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will); and show us our place for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. Al-Qur'an, 002.128 (Al-Baqara)

This certifies that both Abraham and Ishmael were Muslims, and it was Abraham who first of all named his followers as Muslims. We also learn that till about 2200 years after Abraham and Ishmael, many of their traditions survived in the people in the vicinity of Makkah, while there had always been some sane persons who continued to claim themselves as followers of Abraham there. Later on about 250 years before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Omar bin Luhayy introduced idolatry at Kaaba which was finally eradicated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 8 Hijra. Since then, the pure religion of Abraham has been restored at Makkah and throughout the Muslim world till today. During the last 1400 years since the advent of the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the Muslims never diverged from the pure faith of Abraham, while the Almighty Lord has also been **turning to Muslims in mercy and forgiving their sins graciously**. No wonder that the

followers of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) have never been punished in the way the Israelites were punished again and again. Of course, there had been many lapses even on the part of Muslims, yet the Lord God had always been rescuing them from the mire, and it is hoped that the Lord will mercifully forgive their lapses even on the Day of Judgment.

The Greatest Prayer of Abraham

In continuation of the prayers, quoted above, we come to the last and most important prayer of Abraham for his descendants through Ishmael in particular and for all the people of the world in general.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

002.129 "Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them: For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (Al-Qur'an, 002.129 (Al-Baqara)

For a better understating of this prayer, we shall analyze it in parts as under:

i. Request for a Prophet: We discussed earlier that Abraham was the leader of mankind and his main object in life had been to lead the people towards one and the only Lord God of the universe. As regards his descendants from Isaac, he had received the good news of the birth of Jacob and it is presumed that the Lord also revealed to him about a chain of prophets from the descendants of Jacob i.e. from Israel. Since Ishmaelites were far off from Canaan and in the wilderness at Makkah, therefore it was impossible for the prophets of Israel to guide them appropriately. The prayer for a prophet from the Ishmaelites was therefore of utmost importance for the Arabs and also for all other people of the world, so that they might receive proper guidance towards the true faith in the Lord. The Lord therefore accepted the prayer of Abraham in such a manner that He raised His last and the greatest of the prophets

from the descendants of Ishmael at Makkah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a Nabi, a Rasul, a king and a priest. He was also a general of his army, a social reformer, and the best role model for a righteous conduct for the mankind. It was he who brought the final covenant of the Lord for the mankind which would remain intact and operative for all the times to come.

The new covenant was peculiar in the sense that it did not bifurcate the human race into the people of the Lord or the gentiles as per practice of the Israelites. It abolished the privileged classes such as Levites, priests, or the sons of God. The covenant of the Lord eliminated all discrimination on the basis of color, race, or region; and introduced a class-less society in the world. No one was above the Law and all had equal privileges and rights their creator. The Law of the Lord has been introduced by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), therefore, envisaged worldwide peace on the basis of the universal brotherhood of mankind. All the people of the world were equal before the Lord while each one had to be judged on the basis of his obedience or transgression of the commandments of the Lord, as already quoted above (Al-Qur'an 49:13).

The new covenant was the common property of all the people of the world and the same could be memorized or copied from the standard text by anyone in the world. The book was neither consigned to the temple nor kept under lock and key. No permission of the high priest was required to copy or to memorize any part of the covenant. It was free for all the people of the world and the heart of every believer could be the sanctuary for the book of the Law. No one enjoyed any priority over others on the basis of any hereditary rights or appointments in the temple. **The covenant of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is therefore the common heritage of the mankind for all the times to come.** All the members of the Muslim society therefore knew full well the main content of the Law. No one needed to ask another (such as a priest) about specific validity or application of the Law. The main body of the Law was loud and clear and its contents could be understood by the masses without invoking any authority from the priesthood. As such, the reformation brought by the Prophet culminated in establishing an ideal society obeying the commandments of the Lord meticulously and

wholeheartedly. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was, therefore, the only Prophet who established the kingdom of God on earth successfully, and the Law given by him serves as a basis for the moral law and social justice in the world.

ii. Purpose of the Prophet: It is interesting to note that Abraham did not pray for the Prophet either to release the Ishmaelites from slavery or to make them owners of any land. There was no worldly purpose behind the prayer. The purpose of the prophet was specifically defined i.e. to rehearse the signs of the Lord to the people and to instruct them in scripture and wisdom. There is no doubt that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the most befitting answer to the prayer of Abraham, the friend of the Lord. The believers held the Qur'an in great esteem. Most of the companions of the prophet (PBUH) learnt the entire Qur'an by heart, put the commandments of the Lord in practice, and became the people full of wisdom as visualized by Abraham about 2500 years before the advent of the Holy Prophet in Arabia. (Al-Qur'an 2:129)

iii. The Prophet may purify the People: The last part of the prayer shows the desire of Abraham that the prophet may purify and sanctify the people. The word used in the Qur'an is **تَزَكِّيهِمْ** which had its root in **زَكَّى** meaning pure, virtuous, just, and pious, etc. This shows that Abraham had earnestly craved for the improvement in faith, moral conduct, piety, and righteousness in the people. There is no doubt that among all the prophets of the world, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had the distinction of changing his companions into saints of the Lord in whom the Lord was well pleased. They never behaved like the Israelites who have always been complaining and rebelling against the prophets and the Lord. We therefore find that the Lord Himself certified the conduct of the companions of the Prophet in the following words:

Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. **Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure.** On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurat; and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong;

it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight. As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at them. **Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward.** (Al-Qur'an, 048.029 (Al-Fath))

This shows that all the prayers of Abraham were granted by the Lord, He amply accepted the service of Abraham and Ishmael for raising the walls of Kaaba and made them Muslims. Their progeny were also made Muslims bowing to the will of the Lord. The Lord God graciously showed them the places of worship, taught them the rites of worship, and had always been merciful to them. The final outcome of the fulfillment was the creation of an ideal society on earth through the people who feared the Lord, who stood completely changed from inside and proved righteous in their conduct. These enlightened people established peace, justice, and an amiable social order by subjecting their own will to the will of the Lord on earth. Eventually, the process of reformation groomed some companions of the Prophet into great personalities leading the world into various walks of life. We, therefore, conclude that no other prophet could establish the Kingdom of the God on earth in the way Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) succeeded to establish the same.

Prophecy of Jacob

We know that Isaac and Jacob were great prophets and successors of Abraham after Lut and Ishmael. Jacob had even the opportunity to enjoy the patronage and blessings of Abraham for about 15 years, whereas he remained in the company of his father Isaac for about 120 years. He therefore had full opportunity to know about all the traditions of Abraham and his involvement and concern about the ancient house of the Lord at Makkah. Jacob must also have prayed facing towards the same house of the Lord in the company of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham. As he was a true successor of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, therefore, he must have been fully conversant with the rituals of worship of Abraham and the sanctity of Kaaba as a place of worship of Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. Jacob knew that the walls of the ancient House were constructed by his grandfather as per guidance of the Lord (Al-Qur'an 2:123-126). Similarly, he was not unaware

about the prayers of Abraham about Makkah and also about the future advent of a Prophet from among the descendants of Ishmael there. (Al-Qur'an 2:127-129 quoted above).

Thus, the prayer pertaining to the Prophet from among the descendants of Ishmael was of utmost importance to all the people of the world. It was in view of the same that Jacob called his sons, as recorded below:

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. (Gen 49:1 KJV)

Jacob made many predictions about all of his sons, but the most important among the predictions was the one conveyed to Judah in presence of all the descendants of Jacob:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Gen. 49:10 KJV)

The prediction, as above, clearly refers to the fact that the tribe of Judah will continue enjoying sovereignty, power, and a Law-giver for a long time, and it will not depart from them till the advent of Shiloh.

Shiloh: The *New Bible Dictionary*, (Intervarsity Fellowship) has explained the term 'Shiloh' in many ways which include the following:

That Shiloh is a messianic title by emending Shiloh to Sellah and translating with the LXX '**until that which is his shall come** i.e. things reserved for him'. following a variant reading in LXX '**until he come whose it is**, whatever it may be (Onkelos says it means the kingdom). If it will be taken as a title it will have to mean something like **the peace maker**.

Prof. Abdul Ahad Dawood (*Muhammad in the Bible*, Darul Ishaat, Urdu Bazar, Karachi, Pakistan) says that Syric Pschitta has translated it into "he whom it belongs or it may also be rendered as until he whom it belongeth come." If the word is derived from Shalah, it will mean peaceful, tranquil, quiet, and trustworthy. Prof. Dawood has further dilated on the subject by saying that "Shalah means to

send, delegate, the past participle of which would be Shaluh i.e. one who is sent, apostle, messenger. He therefore says that I think **apostle of God.**

Since the Old Testament cannot be retrieved in its original form, language, or contents, therefore, one cannot be definite about the actual words used in the prophecy. Anyhow, even the available contents of the text foretells a time when **both the sceptre of authority and the Law-giver will depart from the tribe of Judah.** It also goes without saying that the prophecy does not pertain to Jesus, because according to the New Testament, he was from the tribe of Judah, and if he was the Shiloh, then there was no question of departing of the sceptre of authority or some Law-giver from Judah to others outside Israel. It is also worth-noting here that Jesus cannot be termed as a Law-giver, because he himself was a mere follower of the Law of Moses. He declared emphatically that he did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets:

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. (Luk. 16:17 KJV)

According to him, not a dot shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Mat. 5:17-19).

Instead of Jesus, it was St. Paul, the so-called apostle for the gentiles, who factually tried to destroy the Law of Moses, and instead of obedience to the commandments of the Lord he strongly advocated obedience to the Law and commandments of the Roman despots. We must therefore look towards someone else to whom the sceptre of authority and the nobility of giving Law had to be assigned after the same departed from the tribe of Judah. It goes without saying that the new Law-giver was not supposed to do away with the Law of the Lord inherited by the believers since Abraham and promulgated by all the prophets of Israel from Moses to Jesus. Instead of destroying the Law, it was the duty of the new Law-giver to restore and purify the Law of the prophets and to modify the same as per fresh commandments from the Lord.

It also suggests that the beneficiary of the prediction could be no one from among the Israelites; otherwise, Jacob might have alluded to the transfer of power and the prophecy from one tribe of his descendants to another. Moreover, we cannot assume that Jacob could be unaware

of the fact that Abraham had prayed for the particular prophet to be raised from his offspring settled near Kaaba at Makkah (Al-Qur'an 14:37 and 2:127-129). It is now for the people of the Book to identify the person who was from among the descendants of Abraham but not from Judah or Israel, yet he happened to be the greatest Law-giver and the person holding sceptre of authority since it departed from the tribe of Judah. History fails to suggest any other person except Muhammad (PBUH) who literally matches with the prediction, and it was he who gave the final and the everlasting covenant to the mankind. The sceptre of authority therefore shifted from the Judah line of the Israelites to the Quraish of the Ishmaelites and **unto him was the gathering of all the people of Arabia and all the regions surrounding the same**. The prophecy of Jacob therefore has its perfect and literal fulfillment in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and no one else than him. Anyone, who blinds himself from the clear-cut signs of the Lord in the actual history of the world will, therefore, invoke the punishment from the Lord as contained in Deu. 18:19 which we shall discuss shortly.

Since Shiloh is a designation for a messiah, therefore, we do not find any other Law-giver or messiah other than Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who factually held the sceptre and also became the final Law-giver of the world. The prophecy therefore stands fulfilled entirely in him.

Prophecies of Moses

The Muslims believe that Moses has been the greatest prophet and perhaps the only Law-giver in Israel. All prophets of Israel including Moses, David, Elea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezra, John, and Jesus followed the Law of Moses meticulously, yet there had been no prophet before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who could succeed to promulgate and to preserve the Law of the Lord in a perfect manner. The followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) happened to be the best among the followers of the prophets before him, because they observed all the stipulations of the Law of the Lord. In such a typical manner they have become prototype for those who come after them. As against this, Prophet Moses had to deal with an obstinate and defiant community who due to their age-long slavery were accustomed to

perform their duties only under the severe and compulsive supervision of the slave drivers. Over the ages, they had lost the disposition to do anything freely and without coercion from outside. They were so unyielding people that they refused even to believe in the Lord unless and until they could see him exerting His authority physically over them. The Israelites therefore arrogantly questioned Moses "Is the Lord with us or not?" (Exo. 17:7b). Consequently, the Lord had to treat them harshly to make them feel His power and presence at Mount Sinai. The Bible records some of such events pertaining to the period the Israelites were camping at the foot of the Mt. Sinai during the Exodus.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. (Exo 19:16-22 KJV)

Another description substantiating the same is found in the Deuteronomy as under:

These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. **Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die.** For who is there of all flesh,

that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and **the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken** unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. (Deu 5:22-32 KJV)

It is further stated that:

Exo 20:18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. Exo 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. Exo 20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. Exo 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exo. 20:18-21 KJV)

The Bible tells us that in spite of witnessing terrible fire, smoke, and thunder; and feeling clear-cut presence of the Lord, the Israelites did not desist from their rebellious attitude towards the Lord. The Lord therefore decided to punish them severely, and announced the death of all the grown up members of Israel in the desert. Eventually, by the time they reached Moab; all Israelites who were 20 years or more at the time of first covenant at Sinai had died during 38 years wandering in the wilderness. Moses therefore had to make the second covenant with the new generation of Israel in the land of Moab. This covenant, too, contained the same Ten Commandments of the covenant at Sinai and the detailed Law covering all social and religious aspects for Israel. Moses wrote down the entire Law,

handed it over to Levites with many instructions to preserve and to recite the same to the Israelites every year. He also instructed them to write the Law on the stones and to bind tassels to their garments to remind them of the Law. He took great care to preserve the Law, as recorded in the Deuteronomy. Aside from preservation of the Law, Moses also proclaimed certain blessings for obedience of the Law of the Lord (Deu. 28:1-14). Moses also informed them about the consequences of the disobedience to the same (Deu. 28:15-68). Ultimately, Moses announced certain curses as consequences of disobedience to the Law. This he declared in presence of all the people of Israel. After hearing each commandment from Moses, all of them affirmed the same by saying 'Amen' (Deu. 27:15-26). Interestingly, we note that the last curse pronounced by Moses was the following:

Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen. (Deu 27:26 KJV)

Warning against the Pagan Practices

Peace and blessings of God be on Moses billions and billions of times. He made utmost efforts to guide Israel by all the means at his disposal. He definitely had the inspiration and the understanding that the people of Israel after him were likely to be attracted towards the customs, traditions, and the religious practices of the people around them. Moses therefore stressed again and again about strict observation of the Law. He gave them several warnings and forbade them the imitation of the abominable practices of divination being practiced by the pagans in and around Canaan. In view of the above, Moses gave an indication of the worse times which will necessitate the advent of a prophet like Moses to be raised among the brethren of Israel to restore the pure faith of Abraham as well as the strict monotheist teachings of Moses and other prophets of Israel.

He said:

Deu 18:9 When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. Deu 18:10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Deu 18:11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or

a necromancer. Deu 18:12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Deu 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. (Deu. 18:9-13 KJV)

We can safely presume that Moses was also aware of the prayer of Abraham as under:

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "**And also (Imams) from my offspring!**" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers." (2:124)

It is evident from the above that all prophets in Israel from Moses to Jesus were the answer to the prayer of Abraham quoted above. Since Moses also knew about the prayer of Abraham for a prophet from the Ishmaelites (Al-Qur'an 2:129) therefore he indicated the same that the promised prophet would be raised from among the brethren of Israel. Moses also had in mind the prophecy of Jacob vide (Gen. 49:10), predicting the transfer of the power and prophecy from the tribe of Judah and from Israel to others. He therefore indicated the arrival of worse times when the people of Israel might ignore their own teachings and find themselves in the condition stated above (Deu. 18:9-13). This will be the time necessitating the advent of a prophet predicted by Moses, who will come with force and the Fiery Law for the people, and all the people will gather around him. As such, the prediction of the promised prophet can be considered as the most important among the blessings and prophecies made by Moses.

The Promise to Send a Prophet

After the verses quoted above, we find in the Deuteronomy the verses as reproduced hereunder:

14) For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

15) The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

16) According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

17) And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

18) I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deu 18:14-19 KJV)

First of all, we may attend to the interlude i.e. verses 16 and 17 in the prediction quoted above. To understand its significance properly, we must refresh ourselves with the contents of the verses Exo. 19:116-122, Deu. 5:22-32, and Exo. 20:18-21, quoted under the topic *Prophecies of Moses* in this chapter.

To analyze the rest of the verses quoted above, it is necessary to bifurcate the same into parts, as detailed below.

1) The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren.

2) That God will put His words in the mouth of that prophet who will speak unto the people all that the Lord commanded to him.

3) All the people must hearken to the said prophet.

4) The prophet shall speak in the name of the Lord.

5) He will be a prophet like Moses.

6) Whosoever will not hearken to the words of the Lord, he shall require it of him.

The prophecy therefore was an indicator of the worse times when it will be imperative to raise a prophet like Moses from among the brethren of Israel to restore the pure faith of Abraham on earth. In view of the above, we shall examine each part of the prophecy in some detail as under:

1. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren

The sentence quoted above can be studied in three different parts:

That the Lord will raise up a prophet.

From the midst of thee.

of thy brethren.

1.a. It is pertinent to note here that the prophecy suggests the advent of **a single prophet** from among the brethren of Israel. The prophecy therefore has nothing to do with the multitude of prophets raised from among the Israel. The prophet foretold here was, therefore, someone special, unique, and outstanding, as compared with the thousands of ordinary prophets in Israel. The said prophet, however, had many similarities with Moses, the only Law-giver in Israel. It was necessarily something great and of utmost importance about whom the Lord informed Israelites through Moses who was the greatest among all the prophets of Israel. We cannot therefore deny the historic fact of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who is the most befitting fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses in all respects. The singularity of this prophet is something of special importance, as compared with the chain of prophets after Moses in Israel. The prediction of Moses therefore pertained only to the advent of the Prophet foretold by Jacob. He was the most befitting answer to the prayer of Abraham, requesting the Lord God to send **one Prophet** in the descendants of Ishmael at Makkah:

"Our Lord! send amongst them **a Messenger of their own**, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them: For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (Al-Qur'an, 002.129 (Al-Baqara)

The prayer of Abraham and the prediction of Jacob and Moses therefore pertained only to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who was raised from among the descendants of Abraham near the ancient House of the Lord at Makkah. It was the same Prophet to whom the sceptre of authority shifted from the Judah tribe of Israel, and who had the

unique distinction of being the final and ultimate Law-giver in the world as foretold by Jacob in the following words:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Gen. 49:10 KJV)

In view of the above, we can safely presume that the word of the Lord conveyed to Moses was in continuity of the revelations/predictions by Abraham as well as Jacob recorded above. Moses therefore told the Israelites that a prominent prophet like unto him would be raised from among the brethren of Israel i.e. specifically from the Ishmaelites, at a time when the disgusting practices of the nations will be wide spread throughout the region. Such a time had factually reached shortly before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when the disgusting practices, as suggesting in verses 9-14 of Deu. 18 had reached its culmination and it was necessary to rectify the same. This was the time when the promised Prophet of the Lord had to be raised from among the brethren of Israel to lead the people towards righteousness. No other prophecy has a better fulfillment in history than the one pertaining to the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) leading billions of people towards the true monotheist faith of Abraham.

1.b. **From the midst of thee:** Scholars now agree that this phrase is an obvious interpolation in the verse 18:15 to show that either the promised Prophet was to be raised from among Israel or from the land occupied by them. Mr. Abdus Sattar Ghauri has given convincing material and the arguments to prove the interpolation as above. In view of the paucity of space at our disposal, we will avoid the lengthy discussion here. Anyhow, the interested readers may find the same in Appendix II of Mr. Ghauri's book *Muhammad Foretold in the Bible by Name* (Al-Maurid, Lahore, Pakistan). We will, however, like to point out that the term 'from the midst of thee', cannot be juxtaposed properly with the term 'of thy brethren', and the oddity cannot be removed unless one of these terms is removed from the text.

1.c. **Of thy brethren:** We pointed out earlier that the addressee of the prediction were the Israelites, and their brethren could be the descendants of Ishmael, the descendants of Esau, or the descendants from other sons of Abraham from his wife Keturah, as detailed in Gen. 25:1-4.

We also note that the Genesis refers to Ishmael in the following words:

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the **presence of all his brethren.** (Gen. 16:12 KJV)

And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and **he died in the presence of all his brethren.** (Gen. 25:17-18 KJV)

Thus, Ishmaelites happened to be more prominent among the brethren of Israel besides being the major branch of the descendants of Abraham. They were the only offspring of Abraham who were settled in the wilderness near Kaaba and Abraham prayed to the Lord for raising a prophet among them (Al-Qur'an 14:37 and 2:129). This leaves no doubt therefore that the prophet predicted by Moses was no one else than Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), a descendant of Abraham at Makkah and the final Law-giver in the world. It is also pertinent to note that the prayer of Abraham was made even before the birth of Isaac and much before the birth of his other sons from his wife Keturah.

2. I will Put My Words in his Mouth

We recall that when Moses married a Cushite (Ethiopian) woman, both Miriam and Aaron criticized him. The Lord, therefore, called Miriam and Aaron in his presence and reprimanded them as detailed in the following:

Num 12:6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

Num 12:7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

Num 12:8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Num. 12:6-8 KJV)

In the verses quoted above, the Lord made it amply clear to Miriam, the prophetess, and Aaron, the prophet, that if

there be some prophets in Israel the Lord will speak to them in vision or in dream; but Moses had a distinction over all the said prophets in the sense that the Lord will speak to him mouth to mouth. This shows that the Lord spoke to Moses in clear-cut words and not in parables or riddles. Prophet Moses therefore conveyed clear-cut and correct message of the Lord to his people, while none of other prophets in Israel could claim either the exactness or the clarity/certainty of the revelation received by him. As regards Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the Lord God told Moses clearly that he even excelled Moses in respect of the reception, as well as, further communication of the word of God. In the case of the promised one, the Lord clearly emphasized the fact that He will put His words in the mouth of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who will rehearse the same to the people exactly in the words of the Lord. This was revealed to Moses that:

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. (Deu 18:18 KJV)

The Lord fulfilled His promise in Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and confirmed that Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was not conveying anything to the people of his own. That what he said to the people was nothing but the word of God:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ - إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: (Al-Qur'an, 053.003-004 (An-Najm))

This was, therefore, a unique feature of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that the Lord put His words in his mouth, and the Prophet dictated the word of the Lord to be taken down or to be memorized by the people exactly in the words of the Lord. The actual history and tradition of the Prophet also confirm fulfillment of the prediction of Moses as per Deu. 18:18. Even the first revelation made to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) at cave Hira at Makkah proves the same:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ - خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ - اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ

Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,- (Al-Qur'an, 096.001-003 (Al-Alaq))

The Qur'an, therefore, contains an inbuilt evidence that the Lord put His words in the mouth of the Prophet which he conveyed to the believers exactly as received from the Allah. Many Suras (chapters) of the Qur'an, therefore, start from the commandment قُل (say to the people). In other cases, we always find the Lord speaking in the first person addressing the people directly or commanding to the Prophet to proclaim the word of Lord. This shows that the entire Qur'an is the word of the Lord revealed to the Prophet who rehearsed the same to the believers exactly as dictated by the Lord. The fulfillment, as above, was also the most gracious response to the prayer made by Abraham (Al-Qur'an 2:129) about 2500 years before the advent of the Prophet at Makkah.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) therefore took extreme care to dictate the word of the Lord to the scribes as soon as the same was received from the Lord. Besides recording the same in writing, the prophet exhorted the believers to get it memorized by heart. No wonder that thousands of people could memorized the entire Qur'an during the life of the Prophet and they could reproduce the same with utmost correctness. Subsequently there had always been millions of Muslims who could recite the entire Qur'an accurately from their memory, while the number of such people is increasing day by day. The prophecy therefore stands fulfilled in its entirety in Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and also in the book revealed to him.

3. He shall Speak unto them All that I shall Command

The phrase as above suggests that the promised Prophet will be a source of important commandments of the Lord i.e. a bearer of the covenant. He will therefore teach faith and all the rituals of worship as per guidance from the Lord. This also included all the do(s) and the don't(s) contained in the words which were precise, exact, and unambiguous. Needless to say that the commandments of the Lord were

not conveyed in the parables or in the terms which could be interpreted in various ways. Even the prophet, as said earlier, could not add or subtract anything from the revelation of the Lord. Such revelations could neither be a vision nor a dream which could be interpreted differently by the people. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) therefore had all his revelations in the specific words and the Lord took on Him to preserve the same forever, which is a living sign of the Lord. Hence, the perfect preservation and immutability of the Qur'an, its existence in its original words, language, and form is an irrefutable sign of the fulfillment of the Word of God for all the people on earth. This was so because the Lord said:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَاطِقُونَ

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption). (Al-Qur'an, 015.009 (Al-Hijr))

4. Unto him you shall Harken

The purpose of the prophecy was reminder to Israelites especially, and to other people generally, to pay full attention to the commandments received through the promised Prophet of the Lord. The Israelites were also told that the last Prophet would be from among their brethren i.e. the Ishmaelites, and they were bound to obey him as per commandment of the Lord conveyed to them through Moses about 1800 years before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at Makkah. It was, therefore, imperative for them to wait for the promised Prophet and to receive him properly when he started his mission to guide all the people of the world.

A PROPHET LIKE MOSES

Perhaps the most important clause of the prophecy under review was that the Lord would raise a prophet like Moses from among the brethren of Israel to whom they must hearken for their success in the world and their salvation in the Hereafter. Let us discuss the same in some detail:

Background of the Prophecy

Before proceeding to discuss the actual likeness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with Moses, we must refresh ourselves with the particular background in which Moses made the prophecy about the Prophet promised by the Lord. We know that Israelites after their release from the Egyptians had wandered for about 40 years in the wilderness, and they at the end of their journey were staying in the land of Moab before their entry and occupation of Canaan. The Deuteronomy has recorded various addresses of Moses delivered to Israel before his death in Moab. He reminded the people about the special favors of the Lord and especially the miracles and great events since the release of Israel from the slavery of the Egyptians to the time they were ready to occupy Canaan. Moses therefore rehearsed the Ten Commandments again and again which also contained the first and the most important Commandment Moses gave strict instructions to preserve the same forever.

Deu 6:4 **Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:**
Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deu. 6:4-9 KJV)

Moses wrote the entire Law in a book and consigned it to the Levites for its preservation and reciting the same to Israel occasionally as instructed in Deu. 27:1-10, 31:9-13,

and 31:22-29. He also made a fresh covenant with the new generation of Israel and gave them various warnings. In addition to the above, Moses proclaimed many blessings for obedience to the commandments, while he also pronounced curses for those who would violate the Law of the Lord. Among his final instructions, the following perhaps need more attentions than others:

1) Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. (Deu 11:1 KJV)

2) Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. (Deu 11:26-28 KJV)

Moses warned Israel against idolatry, as detailed in Deu. 12:29-32, and also about the false prophets Deu. 13:1-11. After giving detailed instructions to Israel, Moses admonished them to desist from pagan practices such as listed in Deu. 18:9-14. It was at this juncture that Moses pronounced his most important prophecy about the advent of **a Prophet like unto Moses** from among the brethren of Israel i.e. from the Ishmaelites.

Muhammad the Prophet Like Moses

We note that almost a thousand years after Moses, Ezra testified to the fact that no prophet like Moses was ever raised from among the Israel:

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel. (Deu. 34:10-12 KJV)

Although there had been many great prophets in between Ezra and Jesus but no one ever claimed to be like Moses. John the Baptist denied that he was the prophet foretold by Moses (John 1:21). Jesus, when asked by John, did not give a clear-cut reply. He avoided confirming that he was the promised one (Mat. 11:3-6). Anyhow, the only prophet in history who had many similarities with Moses was

Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and no one else. Here are some points to substantiate our claim as above:

Similarities between Moses and Muhammad

a) Both Prophet Muhammad and Prophet Moses were strict monotheists

We find that the essential part of the teachings of Moses was included in the Ten Commandments while most important among the commandments was the first one, reproduced as under:

Hear, O Israel: **The LORD our God is one LORD:** And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deu 6:4-5 KJV)

There are many other verses confirming the same faith of Moses, but for a ready reference we quote only a few of such verses as under:

1) Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. **Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;** (Deu 6:13-14 KJV)

2) And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. (Deu 8:19 KJV)

3) And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, (Deu 32:37 KJV)

4) See now that **I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me:** I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. (Deu 32:39 KJV)

The verses quoted above are enough to prove that there was no other god or gods besides the one and the only Lord God of the universe. Like Moses, the same faith is the basis of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). No one can become a Muslim unless he gives Shahada i.e. he testifies the faith in the following words:

اشهد ان لا اله الا الله واشهد ان محمدا عبده ورسوله

I bear witness that **there is no god but Allah**, and Muhammad is His servant and apostle

Jesus, too, preached the same, but Christian theology as propounded by St. Paul and his followers, contradicts the teachings given above. Instead of a prophet of the Lord, the Christians have elevated Jesus as the son of God and consider him very God of very God. As such, Jesus is worshiped as a deity among the triad i.e. Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Christians, therefore, worship three independent and separate persons as gods, but strangely enough, they still proclaim that the Trinity forms only one godhead as argued by them. The Jesus of the Christian theology is therefore a universe apart from Moses as well as Muhammad (PBUH) who were simply the servants and the messengers/prophets of the one and the only Lord God of the universe.

b) Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) organized their people into nations strong and great

Moses was sent to a people who, due to their long slavery in Egypt, had lost their identity as a nation. They had already forgotten all about the faith and practices of Abraham and had adopted idolatry in imitation of the Egyptians. Moses freed them from slavery, organized them into a nation, and made them trusty of the covenant with the Lord (Deu. 29:10-15). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), too, was raised among the people who were originally the descendants or followers of Abraham, but over the ages, they gradually leaned towards the idolatry, while most of them had forgotten the true faith of Abraham. They were disorganized brutes instead of human beings or a nation of the civilized people. It was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who banished idolatry, restored the true religion of Abraham among them, and organized them as a civilized and enlightened society which formed themselves into a great nation of the world. It was therefore Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was like Moses in many respects. As regards Jesus, he neither had any such background nor he organized any society under his own supervision. His nation i.e. Israel did not accept him. He was persecuted and allegedly crucified at their behest. The Jews had refused to receive John the Baptist, and Jesus the Christ, who happened to be the last of the prophets in Israel. They assassinated John and prompted Romans to crucify Jesus. Consequently, the Lord chastised them severely. In 70 AD the Romans besieged the city and razed the Temple and

the walls of the city to the ground. Most of the Jews were killed and the city as well as the debris were set on fire. Survivors were either enslaved or deported to Rome while the few who fled away had no option to live in Diaspora throughout different countries of the world up to the mid of the twentieth century. All these events show that Jesus and his followers could not establish any similarity with Moses and his followers.

c) Prophets of the covenant: Moses made a covenant with the Lord at Sinai. He ratified another covenant of his people with the Lord in the land of Moab. He gave detailed law to his people and made all the people of Israel witness to the same. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), too, gave the covenant of the Lord in shape of the Qur'an and ratified it finally with the Lord in the presence of about 1,24,000 companions in Arafat on the 9th of Dul-Hajja of 10th Hijra. As such, there is a striking similarity between Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) being the prophets of the covenant. As against this, there is no evidence of ratification of the covenant by Jesus with his people nor did he leave any written record of the same.

d) The Covenants were Everlasting and Similar in Nature: A careful study of the essential features of the covenant of Moses and the Qur'an shows that they broadly agreed on all basic principles. Leaving aside certain temporal instructions or some minor details, they were almost the same. Except for observation of Sabbath, there was no conspicuous difference, especially regarding the absolute oneness of the God, the prohibition of idolatry, and other contents of the Ten Commandments. The Law of Moses therefore matched broadly with the Law contained in the Qur'an. As such, the teachings of Moses and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were almost similar to each other. Jesus, too, was a follower of the Law of Moses, but he neither entered into any fresh covenant with the Lord nor did he organize any new society on the basis of his teachings. The genuine apostles of Jesus remained a part and parcel of the Jewish community sharing all the temple services with them. **It was St. Paul, the self declared apostle for the gentiles, who laid the basis for Trinity by elevating Jesus from a servant and prophets of the Lord to godhead.** It was he who denied the Law of Moses

and declared freedom of his followers from the commandments of the Lord. To fill the gap, he advised them to obey to all the commandments of the Roman despots. He therefore did a great service to the Romans by removing the continued resistance from the Jews who stuck to the Law of Moses and refused to follow the Law of the Romans. All these events prove dissimilarity between the teachings in the name of Jesus and the practices adopted by the so called followers of the Christ.

e) Priests and kings: We may note that Moses as well as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were both high priests and kings among their people at one and the same time. Anyhow, being the prophets, they did not behave like ordinary kings of the world. They lived among their people just like others without any worldly distinction at all. They, however, led righteous lives and enjoyed more power and prestige as compared with the kings around them. This was due to the facts that the prophets ruled over the souls instead of bodies of their followers. As against this, Jesus was neither accepted as a prophet nor as a high priest by his nation. He therefore did not enjoy unquestioned obedience from the people of Israel. Hence, Jesus had no likeness with Moses or Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in this respect.

f) God spoke to Moses after calling him on Mount Sinai, while he called Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to his presence in the Heavens. The Bible tells us that the Lord called Moses to the top of Mt. Sinai and spoke to him directly. The Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, on the other hand, reveal that during the part of a night, the Lord took Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) from Makkah to Jerusalem miraculously and thence to Heaven in His own presence. There he was shown most prominent signs of the Lord. He was shown the Hell as well as the Heaven and various other facts relating to the realm of Heaven. Prophet Muhammad therefore became the herald of the knowledge of events after death, i.e. the events starting from the grave to resurrection, the Day of Judgment, the punishments and the rewards, which the human beings are likely to experience in the world to come. Jesus never had such a similarity either with Moses or Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

g) Both Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) Emigrated from their place of birth and thereafter they led their

people to success. Jesus had no similarity with them on that account, too.

h) Moses guided his nation for about 40 years and remained with them through thick and thin. He served as a leader, as a high priest, and as a general of the army. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) excelled Moses in all these respects and spent 23 years to lead his people to the righteousness as well as to the success in the world. He led several expeditions and was always successful in the same. Jesus was unlike Moses as well as Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) because he was neither a high priest nor a king or even a general of the army in any sense of the term.

i) Moses started the year of Israel as per instructions of the Lord with effect from the Passover as we find in the following:

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. (Exo. 12:1-2 KJV)

Similarly, the emigration of Prophet Muhammad () from Makkah to Medina became the starting point of the Muslim era. As such, there is a similarity of starting the era of the Israelites and of the Muslims from the events of their emigration.

j) Both Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) were born in a natural way. They also remained among their people for a long time and after completion of their mission they died in a natural way and were buried in the earth like other human beings. Jesus therefore had no such similarity with any of them.

k) As leaders and teachers, both Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) organized civil societies to establish the kingdom of God on earth. They also left a large number of their companions and some of them were great leaders capable enough to lead their nations to new heights of glory and success. Jesus left behind him neither an organized society nor any outstanding personalities to lead the people towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Instead of establishment of the Kingdom of God, St. Paul, the self appointed apostle for the gentiles, proclaimed

freedom from the Law of the Lord, while he strived hard to make people subservient to the law of the Roman despots. In addition to the above, the proponents of Christianity openly deviated from the true faith of Jesus and other prophets of Israel. They drifted gradually towards paganism by introducing Trinity instead of strict monotheist faith of the Abrahamic religion. The strict Law of Moses was replaced by greater permissiveness coupled with the complacency of easy and sure salvation, just by believing in the saving sacrifice of Christ Jesus. The Christians have therefore adopted various traditions of pagans and other nations around them, all in the name of the Christ, which have nothing to do with the traditions of Moses. We therefore conclude that the followers of Moses as well as Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) are monotheists and have closer similarities between them, while they share no such similarities with the Trinitarian Christians.

l) Both Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) had been shepherds and spent some time of their youth grazing sheep in the wilderness. Jesus had no such likeness with them.

m) Both Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) spoke in specific and exact words instead of speaking in the parables. They were strong, steadfast, forbearing, and blunt in communicating the commandments of the Lord and they were strict to enforce compliance thereof. Jesus, instead of having a similarity with them, allegedly relaxed the Law of Moses at various occasions. Subsequently, St. Paul, the self-made disciple of Jesus, proclaimed that he had abrogated the Law of the Lord. Eventually, the Law of Moses stood replaced with the Law of the Roman kings. The followers of Paul were thus freed from the Law of the Lord and made subservient to the Law of Romans. Most of the rituals and traditions of Israel were replaced with Hellenic traditions as well as the pagan practices prevailing in the Middle East. All that was declared unclean by Moses, was made permissible for the Christians. As such, the actual faith as well as the practice adopted by the Christians differs from the true faith and traditions of Moses and other prophets.

n) Moses as well as Muhammad (PBUH) brought a Fiery Law for their people. The transgressors were either punished or executed in accordance with the Law, and

under the judgment of Moses or Muhammad (PBUH) at their respective times. They fully succeeded to promulgate and enforce the Law among their people. As compared with this, Jesus neither had the chance nor enjoyed the authority to introduce or to implement the Fiery Law in the society.

o) Likeness in the teachings: Likeness between the prophets cannot be established unless they have a likeness in their teachings. We therefore observe that overall teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are similar to those of Moses. Both these prophets were strictly monotheists. They promulgated fiery law and made the people obey the same. The salvation consisted in the belief of one and the only Lord God of the universe and in the righteous conduct observing strictly the commandments of the Lord. Men had to turn to the Lord repentantly and to behave righteously thereafter for their salvation. As against this, the so-called followers of Jesus i.e. St. Paul, John the evangelist, and others believed in the divinity of Jesus and started worshiping Trinity instead of one and the only Lord God of the universe. The most valued covenant i.e. the pride of Israel, stood annulled by St. Paul and others. There was no salvation, except through faith, in the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus. Thus, the new theory of salvation was something unique and unknown to the prophets of Israel including Jesus himself. The faith of Christianity therefore differs from the faith of Moses and all other true prophets of the Lord.

p) God's verdict about Muhammad's likeness with Moses: The last and irrefutable proof of the likeness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with Moses is the pronouncement by the Almighty God Himself. This we find in the following:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا - فَعَصَى فِرْعَوْنَ الرَّسُولَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ أَخْذًا وَبِيلاً - فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا - السَّمَاءُ مُمْغَطَةٌ بِهِ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا - إِنْ هَذِهِ تَذَكُّرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا

We have sent to you, (O men!) a messenger, to be a witness concerning you, **even as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh**. But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a heavy Punishment. **Then how shall ye, if ye deny (Allah), guard yourselves against a Day that will make children hoary-headed?- Whereon the sky will be cleft asunder? His Promise needs must be accomplished. Verily this is an Admonition:** therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord! (Al-Qur'an, 073.015-019 (Al-Muzzammil)

In the verses quoted above, the whole mankind is addressed by the Lord. Although the Lord has not mentioned any specific names here, yet the people of the Book know full well the name of the Prophet who was sent to the Pharaoh. Similarly, it was not difficult for the people to identify Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the promised Prophet through whom they were receiving the admonition quoted above. It was the same Prophet predicted as per Deu. 18:14-20. As such, the admonition in the Qur'an and also the warning as well as prediction vide Deu. 18:14-20 are enough to establish the fact that those who do not hearken to the word of God must prepare themselves to face the consequences on the Day of the Judgment.

There is still another verse of the Qur'an suggesting similarity between Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) as follows:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ
فَأَمِنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ تُمْرًا إِنْ اللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Say: "See ye? **If (this teaching) be from Allah, and ye reject it, and a witness from among the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity** (with earlier scripture), and has believed while ye are arrogant, (how unjust ye are!) truly, Allah guides not a people unjust." (Al-Qur'an, 046.010 (Al-Ahqaf)

We will note that the word شاهد in the verses 73:15 and 46:10 refer to Moses who conveyed the similar message from the Lord to Israel, and the Lord had warned them sternly to refrain from their arrogance and also to get rid of their prejudice against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Qur'an. Obviously, the witness from Israel who brought the covenant, was no one except Moses; whereas the promised prophet was a witness for the last and final covenant of the

Lord with the mankind. We therefore conclude that only Moses and Muhammad (PBUH) were in the likeness of each other while no such close likeness could be found in any other two prophets after Moses in the world.

Warning for Disobedience to the Prophet

We are fully aware of the fact that the Lord had clearly conveyed through Moses that the promised Prophet would be the one in the likeness of Moses. **He would speak the words of the Lord in the name of the Lord.** The Qur'an therefore is entirely the word of God because it contains exact words revealed to the prophet. The very first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) started with the words *اقراء باسم ربك الذى خلق* i.e. **Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created** (Al-Qur'an 96:1). No wonder that out of a total 114 Suras (chapters) of the Qur'an, 113 Suras start with the preamble *بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ* i.e. in the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful. The prediction about the prophet speaking the word of God in the name of the God, therefore, stands fulfilled in the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Let us also remember here verse 19 of Deu. 18 i.e. 'And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him**', contains a stern warning from the Lord to those who do not hearken to the Prophet foretold by the Almighty. The GNB renders the last part of this verse as '**I will punish anyone who refuses to obey him**'. The Catholic Bible translates it as '**I will be the revenger**'. A similar warning we had already quoted from the Qur'an under the topic 'God's verdict of likeness with Moses'. For ready reference, we quote the same again:

But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a heavy Punishment. Then how shall ye, if ye deny (Allah), guard yourselves against a Day that will make children hoary-headed?- Whereon the sky will be cleft asunder? His Promise needs must be accomplished. Verily this is an Admonition: therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord! (Al-Qur'an, 073.017-019 (Al-Muzzammil))

This must therefore serve as an eye-opener to those who ignore the Prophet foretold by the Lord thousands of years before his advent at Makkah. There is no doubt that only Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) matches exactly with all the predictions about the promised one, since the time of Abraham to Moses. The Lord has therefore revealed that the people of the Book encounter no difficulty in recognizing the promised one. They surely recognize him as accurately as they recognize their own sons.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ
الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

The people of the Book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know. (Al-Qur'an, 002.146 (Al-Baqara)

Acid Test of the Prophet

In view of the utmost importance of the Prophet foretold by the Lord, it was necessary to provide an acid test to the people to determine the genuineness of the said Prophet. The Lord therefore revealed through Moses as under:

Deu 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, **even that prophet shall die.** Deu 18:21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, **if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken,** but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. (Deu 18:20-22 KJV)

As such, proper guidance has been provided to mankind to find the genuineness of the prophet in the manner stated above. We are told that if any prophet commands something in the name of the Lord, which the Lord has not commanded, he shall die. In this respect, we must examine the role of St. Paul, who spoke in the name of other gods i.e. Jesus and the Holy Ghost who had never been worshiped by Moses and other ancestors of Israel. The unnatural death of St. Paul can therefore be a hint

suggesting application of the punishment contained in Deu. 18:21.

We know that Jesus never introduced himself except as a servant and a prophet of the Lord. He always obeyed the Law of Moses and taught his disciples to obey the same. After Jesus, Muhammad (PBUH) was the only genuine Prophet of the Lord who preached to his people for about 23 years and died after completing his mission in a commendable manner. He did not die an un-natural death nor did he leave anything incomplete. So much so that the Lord Himself certified completion of the task given to the Prophet in the following words:

... .. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (Al-Qur'an, 005.003 (Al-Maeda))

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) died only after the completion of his assignment, while the prophecies made by him were either fulfilled during his life time or at the proper time thereafter. There is not a single prophecy which did not turn out to be correct in the actual history of the world. This therefore must stand as a conclusive evidence of the truthfulness and the genuineness of the prophet promised by the Lord.

The acid test, as per Deu. 18:20-22, can also be applied to St. Paul who declared himself as an apostle to the gentiles and introduced Trinity instead of absolute oneness of the God. Since he differs from all the teachings of the prophets therefore he has given the commandments which did not emanate from the Lord. As such, to identify his genuineness, we need to apply to him the acid test mentioned above.

It will also be useful to keep in mind the warning and the criterion given by the Lord in the Qur'an in the following words:

That this is verily the word of an honoured messenger; It is not the word of a poet: little it is ye believe! Nor is it the word of a soothsayer: little admonition it is ye receive. (This is) a Message sent down from the Lord of the Worlds. **And if the messenger were to invent any sayings in Our name, We should certainly seize him by his right hand, And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart: Nor**

could any of you withhold him (from Our wrath). But verily this is a Message for the Allah-fearing. And We certainly know that there are amongst you those that reject (it). But truly (Revelation) is a cause of sorrow for the Unbelievers. But verily it is Truth of assured certainty. So glorify the name of thy Lord Most High. (Al-Qur'an, 069.040-052 (Al-Haaqqa [The Reality]))

Second part of the test, as per Deu. 18:22, suggests that if the prediction made by such a prophet proves wrong, then you must not pay any heed to them. We know that no prophecy made by Moses or Muhammad (PBUH) has fallen short of its fulfillment. Putting St. Paul to the same test, we find that he was expecting the end of the world almost within his own lifetime or soon thereafter. He even advised his followers to stay in the conditions they were in. He suggested that those who are married may remain married and those who are unmarried may not marry at all (1 Cor. 7:1 and 8:7, 8, 26, 31, 32, 34, 40). As against this teaching, we recall that woman was the first gift of the Lord to Adam (Gen. 2:18 and 2:21-22), and the first blessing of the Lord on mankind was to multiply and to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:27-28). The advice of celibacy was therefore against the nature of man and also against the way of all the prophets who led a married life and left their children behind. John and Jesus were perhaps the only exceptions who did not marry simply due to the fact that they died in their early youth without having the opportunity to settle somewhere. Even otherwise, the prophets before them usually married at the age of 40 years or more, while John and Jesus both died before reaching the said age. Had they the time and suitable occasion for the marriage, they would not have deviated from the traditions of their predecessors, nor would they hesitate to avail of the blessings of the Lord as under:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, (Gen 1:28a KJV)

Teachings of celibacy are therefore unnatural and against the blessings of the Lord. Such teachings reflect ungratefulness on the part of man, which may be snobbish and perhaps contemptuous refusal of the gift and the blessings of the Almighty on man.

Final Blessings of Moses

We discussed earlier that since the Exodus, Moses spent all his time to reform the people of Israel by teaching them the contents of the covenant and by exhorting them towards a righteous conduct. Shortly before his death, Moses again wrote down the entire Law, and called the people:

Assemble all your tribal leaders and officials before me, so that I can tell them these things; **I will call heaven and earth to be my witnesses against them.** I know that after my death the people will become wicked and reject what I have taught them. And in time to come they will meet with disaster, because **they will have made the LORD angry by doing what he has forbidden.**" (Deu 31:28-29 GNB)

Moses, thereafter, recited the song to all the Israelites as recorded in Deu. 32:1-39. After finishing the song, Moses pronounced his final blessings which contained a prediction as well as a guidance which was unique in all respects:

And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. (Deu 33:2 KJV)

For a better understanding of the blessings, we shall analyze the same as under:

- a) That the Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them.
- b) He shined forth from Mount Paran.
- c) He came with ten thousand of saints.
- d) From his right hand went a fiery law for them.

We shall examine each part separately as under:

1-a. The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them

Scholars agree that this blessing pertains specifically to the covenants. We know that during the Exodus, the Lord ratified His first covenant with Israelites at Mount Sinai. Israelites, however, rebelled against the Lord and broke the said covenant. Consequently, the Lord inflicted on them the

punishment of death due to which all Israelites who were then of 20 years or more died during their 38 years wandering in the wilderness. Eventually, about 40 years after the delivery of Israel from the slavery, they were in the land of Moab or at Mount Seir, when Moses ratified the second covenant with the new generation of Israel. Although Moses died soon after the second covenant, yet Joshua (his successor), the Levites, and the elders of Israel tried to keep the covenant for a long time thereafter. All prophets of Israel including Jesus followed the Law of Moses strictly, but after the death/ascension of Jesus, St. Paul advocated freedom of Israel from the Law of Moses which had always been the most coveted prize and pride of Israel.

Lord's coming from Sinai therefore denotes that the first covenant at Sinai which was broken due to rebellion of the Israelites. Subsequently, with the death of all the mature participants of the said covenant in the wilderness, the covenant had become ineffective and obscure. Moses therefore ratified the same covenant afresh with the new generation of Israel at Mount Seir or in the land of Moab. Although the process of Law giving had started from Sinai, but the grown up Israelites could not get rid of the bad impacts of slavery on them. It was entirely a new generation groomed under the direct supervision of Moses who regained the requisite courage, confidence, and faith necessary to get possession of the land promised to Israel. This was the occasion when in Land of Edom, or perhaps at Mount Seir, Moses renewed the covenant stated above, and prepared his people to take up the challenging assignment for a better future for them. The event therefore refers allegorically to the Lord's coming from Mount Sinai and rising like a sun from Mount Seir to shed its lights on the areas of the Moabites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, and their surroundings. Lord's rising up from Seir therefore indicates the dawn of the Lord's covenant like a sun. Since the rising of the sun is only the beginning of the day and does not mean the whole day, therefore, the span of time of about 1250 years from the death of Moses to the death or ascension of Jesus can be taken as the rising time of the sun, that is the preliminary introduction of the covenant in the world. This covenant was obviously limited both in time and space and had almost no impact on any other nation except Israel. Unluckily, even the Israelites could not

preserve the original words or the contents of the covenant and they also failed to abide by the same. The Bible itself bears strong witness to numerous violations made by Israelites and the punishments they received from the Lord repeatedly. Ultimately, the rebellion of Israel led to their rejection by the Lord and the kingdom of God was taken over from them and given to another nation who became final trusty of the everlasting covenant of the Lord with mankind.

The prophetic language therefore reveals that after rising from Mount Seir, the Lord shined forth from Mount Paran i.e. the mountain of Makkah valley where the light of the covenant shone forth in its full brightness. The said covenant is intact even today with all its minute details. The covenant was implemented in letter and spirit and it became the code of conduct for billions of Muslims in the world. The covenant is intact even today with its minute details while majority of the Muslims follow the same meticulously. As such, the sun of the covenant, after rising from Seir, has been shining on the entire world from the mount of Paran in Makkah since the advent of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) there; and the same is likely to last till the end of the day i.e. up to the end of the world.

History bears a witness to the fact that the sun of the covenant is increasing in its brightness day by day and the number of Muslims is multiplying rapidly throughout the world. No wonder that during the years 1935 to 1985, the overall increase in the number of Muslims was about 235%, which was faster than the increase in the number of the believers of any other religion on earth. This adequately reflects shining of the sun as per blessings of Moses quoted above.

1-b The Fig, the Olive, and Sinai

Incidentally, we also find a verse in the Qur'an which is almost a parallel to the phrase discussed above. We find the same as under:

وَالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ - وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ - وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ

By the Fig and the Olive, And the Mount of Sinai, And this City of security, - (Al-Qur'an, 095.001-003 (At-Tin))

Fig and olive in the prophetic language usually denotes the blessings of prophet-hood and temporal power in Israel. Here the fig and the olive suggest the lands of Syria and Palestine and its surroundings, such as Sinai, Midian, Edom, Moab, and others. These are the lands which have been either under the missionary pursuits or areas or the emigration lands of the prophets like Noah, Swaleh, Abraham, Lut, Isaac, Jacob, Joab, Shuaib (Jethro), Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, Solomon, Eliah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Ezra, John, Jesus, and numerous other prophets. Hence, the most luminous galaxy of the prophets of the world spent their lives to illuminate the lands stated above.

Mount Sinai refers specially to the first covenant of Moses and signifies the appearance of the Lord to ratify the covenant with Israel there. The second covenant on Mount Seir or in Moab with the new generation of Israel persisted as the Law of Moses for about 1250 years after him. After the lands of fig, the olive, and Mount of Sina, the finality of the covenant was reached at Makkah which the Lord has Himself described as *هذا البلد الامين*, i.e. this city of peace and trustworthiness. Whereas Sinai refers particularly to the covenant of Moses, the word *بلد الامين* refers to Makkah i.e. the land of final covenant of the Lord with mankind. *الامين* means secure, faithful, safe, free, constant, and a trustee etc.; and Makkah corresponds adequately to all the meanings of the term. Since Abraham, Makkah has always been the city of peace, tranquility, and worthy of trust. This city proved trustworthy because its people never tried to change even a dash or dot in the covenant entrusted to them. Most of its people have been God fearing and abstained from rebellion against the Lord. Since the advent of Prophet Muhammad (*صلى الله عليه وسلم*) they never worshiped the idols nor did they bow before any other god except the one and the only Lord God of the universe. They always worshiped the God who was the God of all the prophets from Adam to Jesus and Muhammad (*صلى الله عليه وسلم*). Makkah, therefore, justifies its title as *بلد الامين* because most of its people kept the covenant carefully and they never behaved in the manner of the people of Jerusalem who sinned against the Lord again and again.

It is also worth-noting here that the people of Makkah had full faith and trust in the honesty, integrity, and truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad (*صلى الله عليه وسلم*), even

before he proclaimed himself as a prophet of the Lord. He was commonly referred to with the titles of صادق (the truthful) and امين (trustworthy). The people therefore had utmost faith in him. Even subsequently the followers of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) lived in accordance with the covenant, memorizing the entire Qur'an by heart. The Qur'an was also transmitted to others exactly in the words they heard from the prophet. As such, instead of priests of the temple, ordinary believers became the custodians of the covenant; and instead of the covenant box placed in the temple, the hearts of the believers became the sanctuary of the everlasting covenant of the Lord. The believers, as such, had the covenant before them at all the times wherever they went throughout the world. This kept the believers fully conscious of their obligations under the covenant and their responsibilities to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

2. He shined forth from Mount Paran

As for Paran, the Bible mentions it initially as the abode of Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness in Sinai Peninsula. The Christian expositors of the Bible usually place Paran in the south of Canaan in between Beersheba and Mount Sinai on one side, and the area between the desert of Shur to the Gulf of Aqabah and the Dead Sea on the other. The narration as above cannot, however, be substantiated either from geographic facts or history of Sinai Peninsula nor can it be proved by independent evidence outside the Bible. Factually, Ishmael, Hagar and their descendants never had any settlements in the afore-stated Paran. Towards the end of the 4th century BC, however, the Nabataeans (descendants of Ishmael) took over control of the lands in south, southeast, and northeast of Canaan and their possessions made a crescent around the said lands starting from Gilaed to the north of Moab, and Preya, Idumea south of Canaan. They also held the lands from south of Gaza up to the Mediterranean. Prior to this, the Ishmaelites have been controlling mainly the areas of Hijaz, the present province of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and many other lands in the Arabian Peninsula, but ever since

Ishmael and Hagar, the Ishmaelites never had any settlements in the Sinai Peninsula. Since Paran finds its first reference in respect to the settlements of Hagar, Ishmael, and their descendants, therefore, it must be the area of settlement of the twelve tribes of the descendants of Ishmael. History of the Arabian world, therefore, shows them mostly in the southwestern parts of Arabia with its extension up to the borders of Canaan in the North, the central point of the Ishmaelites has always been the Makkah valley which is the actual Paran of the Bible. Mount Paran, therefore, essentially refers to the hills in the Makkah valley, where the greatest, the final, and the most comprehensive covenant of the Lord was ratified with the mankind to last for all times to come. This has been the covenant which became the code of conduct for billion of Muslims since about 609 AD till today. Presently, about 1.5 billions Muslims in the world believe and abide by he same. The valley and the mountains of Makkah are, therefore, the Paran as predicted by Moses. (For further study about Paran please also refer to our article on Paran as Appendix II of the book.)

3. He came with 10 thousand saints

Aside from the appearance of the promised Prophet from Mount Paran in Makkah, the description of his appearance with 10 thousand saints has pinpointed the prophet of the covenant. He was the most befitting answer to the prayer of Abraham for a prophet from among his descendants through Ishmael at Makkah (Al-Qur'an 2:129). To him applies the prophecy of departure of the sceptre and the Law-giver from the tribe of Judah, as predicted by Jacob (Gen. 49:10). Consequently, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the only historic personality to whom gathering of the people has been witnessed by all the people of the world.

To further elucidate, the phrase pertaining to ten thousand saints, it will be useful to note here that Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarthi has reproduced the Hebrew text of the prophecy contained in Deu. 33:2 in Arabic script as under:

و يؤمر يهوه مسينائي بأوزاح مسعير لا موهو فريح مهر پاران و اتامر بيوث قودش

ميينو ايش داث لا مو۔

And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them.

Maulana Abdul Haq says that the word قودش used in the text means 'holy ones' or 'the saints of the Lord'. Similarly, the word ريث in مر بيوت means ten thousand. We therefore find that all earlier versions of the Bible in English have translated it as ten thousand, while the recent trend in most of the versions of the Bible has been to render the same as millions of Saints. This, according to Maulana Abdul Haq, is an effort only to make the prophecy obscure. Anyhow, no one can blur or mystify the broad daylight evidence of the history, fulfilling the prophecy literally in Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) at Makkah, being the only prophet appearing in the company of ten thousand saints all wearing Ihram, (احرام) i.e. the usual saintly and ritual dress worn by the pilgrims to the ancient House of the Lord. Among all the prophets of the world, only Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had the distinction that his companions happened to be the saints of the Lord or the holy ones who earned approval of the Lord in their life time, as quoted earlier (Al-Qur'an 48:29). The said appreciation is also manifest from the following:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأُولُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ
عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ

The vanguard (of Islam)- the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds,- **well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him:** for them hath He prepared gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme felicity. (Al-Qur'an, 009.100 (At-Tawba)

The prophecy, therefore, stands fulfilled entirely and without a shadow of doubt in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his ten thousand companions appearing at Mount Paran i.e. Makkah in 8th Hijrah i.e. about 629 AD. As a contrast to the above, we recall the conduct of the Israelites who usually persecuted their prophets and complained as well

as rebelled against the Lord. Instead of saints, most of the Israelites behaved as rebels against the Lord. As such, no other prophet ever had ten thousand companions who could be termed as the saints or the holy ones. Only Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had the unique privilege of having such companions, entering the House of the Lord all in the saintly dress with the sole purpose of ratifying the covenant of the Lord with the people of Makkah in particular and with all the people of the world in general. This happened in 8th Hijra (AD...), and the last and the final covenant of the Lord stands promulgated throughout the world since then.

4. From his right hand went a fiery law for them

We note that the last clause of the prophecy has thrown full light on the purpose of the prediction. **The main theme of the prediction was the covenant or the Law of the Lord** for guidance and compliance of the mankind. As no kingdom can be established without a law, therefore, the covenant contained the comprehensive law to establish the kingdom of God on earth. We said earlier that among all the life in the universe, only jinn and man were free from the compulsion and only they enjoyed the freedom to choose between good and bad and to act in accordance with their own choice. These species therefore needed guidance to find a straight path towards the Lord. All prophets came with the same mission of guiding the human beings towards the Lord. After Adam, Noah, Hud, and Swaleh, Abraham was the paragon of virtue who was declared as the leader of the mankind. All prophets, such as Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joab, and Shuaib (Jethro), were the followers of the covenant of Abraham. Moses was, perhaps, the most prominent prophet after Abraham who was given a comprehensive covenant for the people of Israel and others. Eventually, he made the first covenant at Sinai and ratified the covenant once again with the new generation of Israel at Mount Seir or in the adjoining land of Moab. For ultimate guidance of Israelites and other people in the world, Moses warned them to refrain from pagan practices in the land they were going to occupy. Moses also fore-told the advent of the prophet like unto himself from the Ishmaelites (i.e. the brethren of

Israel) to whom they must hearken (Deu. 18:15 and 18:18). He told them that the prophet of the covenant had to appear from Mount Paran in the company of ten thousand saints and with a Fiery Law for them. In this respect we, therefore, note that no other prophet except Moses came with fiery law for mankind. After Moses, it was only Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who introduced the Fiery Law which entailed among others punishments such as cutting of the hands of the thieves, stoning the adulterous people to death, and flogging the drunkards etc. He sat on judgment and punished the transgressors of the limits set by the Lord. The prophecy, therefore, stood fulfilled in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as an everlasting sign of the Lord for mankind. It has, therefore, become imperative for all the people of the world to follow the said Prophet as per commandments of the Lord.

THE TEACHINGS AND PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH

Isaiah was a great prophet of Israel. The book bearing his name is an anthology of poems, composed by him, and by other anonymous poets or writers of later periods. Importance of the book can be assessed from the fact that some Christian scholars assign status of the fifth Gospel to it. This is perhaps due to the fact that St. Paul, Mathew, Luke, John, and others have drawn up a magnified and glorified portrait of Jesus Christ mostly by utilizing the oracles from Isaiah, as we shall discuss subsequently. These Evangelists also have relied upon Isaiah as an important source predicting the advent of the messiah, i.e. Jesus, the suffering servant of the Lord and the only savior of mankind. They accomplished the portrait of Jesus Christ as the redeemer by selecting certain oracles from Isaiah, Psalms, and other parts of the Old Testament and by interpreting them in the manner that suited the theme of the savior Lord of the Christians.

Prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, received his call in 740 BC, i.e. the year of King Uzziah's death. He proclaimed his message to Judah and Jerusalem probably between 742 and 687 BC (Introduction to Isaiah, *Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1962).

Scholars agree that only chapter 1 to 39 can be assigned to Isaiah's time when Ahaz was panic-stricken at the invasion of Syria and Ephraim who intended to force Judah into a coalition against Syria against Assyria. Ahaz, on the other hand, was meditating an appeal for help to Tiglath-Pileser the king of Assyria. Isaiah warned Ahaz against the step which could grant him only a temporary relief from the invasion but subjecting him to an indefinite overlordship of the Assyrians. "He bade him trust in God and despise his foes. The prophecies Isa. 9:2-7 and 11:1-9 were therefore the message of immediate salvation and relief from the panic stated above. Peake therefore comments as under:

The faith of the mother, who would name her son Immanuel, thus uttering her conviction that God was with His people,

would shame the policy of the unbelieving king. But when the fatal step had been taken and Judah's independence had been bartered for Assyria's help, Isaiah counselled his countrymen against futile attempts at revolt. For no pause could be set to Assyria's advance by any human power. Assyria was indeed to be broken and cast aside, but only by Yahweh, and not till she had achieved His purpose. Meanwhile he commends his motto, In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." For when Assyria's work is done, her haughtiness and braggart arrogance will be punished. Then, when she is destroyed and Judah is free, the era of blessedness will begin. There will be a stable government and a righteous administration under the Messianic king, who passes through victory to an abiding peace. Agriculture will flourish, the land will be very fruitful, prosperity will abound. Judah's reliance will be placed on no earthly power, but on Yahweh alone. (*ibid*, p. 436)

The prophecy regarding the birth of a child to be named Immanuel by a woman then pregnant was only a sign of immediate relief to King Ahaz as an encouraging message at the time when the king was dismayed due the alliance of Syria and Ephraim against him. He was therefore given a message to keep trust in God for his deliverance. The message of Isaiah also predicted Israel's future blessedness as pointed out by Peake in the paragraph quoted above. This prediction was therefore fulfilled entirely with the immediate and unsuccessful withdrawal of the enemies of Ahaz and also by righteous administration under the messianic kings like Hezekiah and Joshua of Judah as recorded in the Old Testament. We therefore find no justification for applying the afore-stated prophecies to Jesus whose mission ended in vain within a year or so without establishing any righteous administration or without sitting on the throne of Judah as a messianic king.

It is worth-noting here that Isa. 40-55 belong to the time when many of the people of Judea were actually in exile at Babylon. Isaiah might have died about 90 years before the fall of Jerusalem in the year 586 BC. Isaiah cannot therefore be the person who described the events pertaining to the exile or about the period the Jews were living as slaves in Babylonia. It is further observed that the Chapters 56 to 66 are addressed to the people who were back in Jerusalem from their exile, i.e. after 538 BC. The Introduction to Isaiah in the *Annotated Bible*, referred to above, suggests that the afore-stated chapters were

written during the period between 530 to 510 BC which is almost contemporary with Haggai and Zachariah, the prophets in the Old Testament. It is also opined that Chapters 60 to 62 belong to a period later than the return of Israel to Judea, and though compiled under the writings, assigned to Isaiah, cannot actually belong to him.

It is pertinent to note here that Isa. 40:3, i.e. the words allegedly used by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry (Mark 1:2-4) to express the prominence of his calling on the authority of Isaiah, may also be from some anonymous writer and Isaiah may not be the author of the same. The oracles are also paralleled in Malachi 3:1 which the Evangelists interpret and apply in favor of Jesus without proper justification for the same. We have cogent reasons to believe that even the prophecies of Jacob (Gen. 49:10) and Moses (Deu. 18:9-20 and 33:2) do not suggest Jesus as the promised one. We already had a detailed discussion on the subject to substantiate our view that the afore-stated prophecies pertain to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and only he can be the person indicated as the promised one, the Law giver and the prophet of the covenant foretold by Jacob, Moses and other prophets of Israel.

Scholars also hold that Isa. 52:13-15 and chap. 53 are the writings of unknown scribes of the later periods. These verses receive no authentication from Isaiah at all. The said verses have however used as the foundation stone to show Jesus as a 'suffering servant' the one who was wounded and sacrificed to pay for the sins of others and to bring forgiveness to mankind. The relevant verses from Isaiah are quoted hereunder for prophet evaluation of the same:

13 The LORD says, "My suffering servant will succeed in his task; he will be highly honored. 14 Many people were shocked when they saw him; he was so disfigured that he hardly looked human. 15 But now many nations will marvel at him, and kings will be speechless with amazement. They will see and understand something they had never known." (Isa. 52:13-15 GNB)

53:1 The people reply, "Who would have believed what we now report? Who could have seen the LORD's hand in this? 2 It was the will of the LORD that his servant grow like a plant taking root in dry ground. He had no dignity or beauty to

make us take notice of him. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him. 3 We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at him--- we ignored him as if he were nothing. 4 "But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God.

5 But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received. 6 All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the LORD made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved. 7 "He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word. 8 He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die, and no one cared about his fate. He was put to death for the sins of our people. 9 He was placed in a grave with those who are evil, he was buried with the rich, even though he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie." 10 The LORD says, "It was my will that he should suffer; his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness. And so he will see his descendants; he will live a long life, and through him my purpose will succeed. 11 After a life of suffering, he will again have joy; he will know that he did not suffer in vain. My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for his sake I will forgive them. 12 And so I will give him a place of honor, a place among the great and powerful. He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of evil men. He took the place of many sinners and prayed that they might be forgiven." (Isa. 53:1-12 GNB)

The underlined portions of verses Isa. 53:10 to 12 quoted above show that Jesus could not be the suffering servant mentioned in the oracles, because the person will live long to see his descendants. Purpose of God will succeed through him. He will live after the life of his suffering to see him successful, and will receive a place of honor among the great and powerful. As such, the ignominious death of Jesus before his marriage or seeing any descendants shows that he was not the person pointed out by the oracle.

We also cannot ignore the verses conflicting with each other. There are obvious interpolations such as 'his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness.' Verses 4 to 9 also contain reflections of certain insertions made in the text. To elucidate the point, we quote from the commentary of A. S. Peake as under:

The book obviously falls into three divisions. (a) 1-35, (b) 36-39, (c) 40-66. The last of these is itself a compilation: It includes no Isaianic matter, and the earliest sections in it are a century and a half later than Isaiah's time. ... But even 1-35 contains much that is not Isaiah's. ... And even the authentic prophecies have probably in some instances been expanded by later insertions. Some scholars insist that the two great messianic messages 9:2-7, 11:1-9 are much later than Isaiah's time." (*A Commentary on The Bible*, Arthur S. Peake, London, 1920, p. 436)

Due to paucity of time and space of our disposal, we shall avoid further referencing on the matter. Anyhow, it is obvious from their had been certain interpolations, expansions and insertions in Isaiah which have deprived the book from the authority or authenticity attached to it. Oracles in Ch. 40-66 are obviously less authentic due to the fact that they are from anonymous writers. No interpretation based on the same can therefore support or sanctify the transcendent image of Jesus Christ as presented by the Evangelists.

Scholars fail to identify the different writers who composed different chapters of Isaiah. Nothing is known about the writers of Ch. 40-66. These oracles in fact represent general ambitions of the elders of Israel from the period of King Ahaz till about 200 years in the post-Exilic period. Much of the material contained in the afore-stated chapters of Isaiah was utilized by St. Paul and other Hellenistic composers of the Gospels to develop the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as we find in the Gospels today. In this respect we must keep in mind that all the true prophets of the Lord were human beings who lived among them with perfect human nature and in the likeness of other human beings around them. Their life and teachings consisted of real events on earth. Nothing about their life or teachings depended on the imagination or visions of other people about them. Visions in fact cannot provide any foundation for faith nor can interpretation of any oracle grant certitude to a faith. Visions therefore cannot be taken at par with the actual events or the real teachings of the prophets based on direct commandments from the Lord. As such no visions, no oracles, dreams or divination can abrogate the constant and confirmed Law of the Lord expressed in the words explicit and specific. Such oracles even if used to

reconstruct the life and teachings of Jesus cannot be utilized to nullify the faith and the teachings of all the prophets of the Lord. Nothing can free the human beings from their obligations to obey all the commandments of the Lord. In view of the above, there is no justification to deviate from the Law and faith of Moses and the prophets including Jesus merely depending upon interpretation of certain unauthentic and ambiguous oracles in Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others. Mystical allegories or interpretations made by those who never had even a chance to see or hear Jesus have no value at all. The exponents of Christianity who boast about abrogating the Law and granting freedom from the same contradict Jesus who came to fulfill and not to destroy the Law or the prophets. Contrary to this, the teachings of St. Paul and his followers, as recorded in the New Testament, are a universe apart from the actual and true teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. With the advancement in the knowledge and increase in awareness at present, many scholars in the West prefer to rediscover the real Jesus and his teachings for proper guidance of the Christians. It is hoped that unbiased findings of the seekers of truth will go a long way to identify the actual person of Jesus Christ and also his teachings affirming the Law and faith of Moses and all the prophets mentioned in the Old Testament.

Since the interpretation of certain oracles in Isaiah helped the earliest Christians to develop their new faith, therefore the Christians sanctify Isaiah as the fifth Gospel of their faith. In doing so we feel they have bypassed or suppressed the main theme of the book of Isaiah by ignoring the message of the Lord and developing a new faith based on the peripheral contents in Isaiah and Psalms etc. It was therefore out of necessity than reality that the exponents of Christianity interpreted the oracles to substantiate their preconceived kerugma and to prove Jesus as the foretold savior and the god incarnate on earth. Contrary to this we find that the real message of Jeremiah was to stress all the basics in the covenant of Moses without any idea of any deviation from the same.

As regards the true theme of Isaiah, we can study the same in the following parts:

1. The sinfulness of the Jews and their arrogance

2. Salvation and forgiveness of sins
3. Absolute oneness of the Lord
4. The person, foretold in Isaiah, was a messenger and not the lord himself
5. The foretold messenger had to establish the Kingdom of God
6. Kingdom to be established under the Law of the Lord
- 1.** The sinfulness of the Jews and their arrogance

Isaiah actually addressed the Jews living in Judah and Jerusalem who were fully immersed in their sinful activities and refused to show any concern for improvement or repentance on their part. The prophet therefore conveyed the displeasure and wrath of the Lord over the transgressions of the Jews. He also revealed to them the guidance from the Lord which could save them from the catastrophe. We find indignation of the Lord expressed in clear-cut words as quoted above. Way towards the salvation had also been reemphasized by the Lord by addressing the Jews in the following manner:

I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. (16) Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; (17) Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (18) Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: **though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.** (19) If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: (20) But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isa 1:15b-20 KJV)

The verses quoted above are enough to testify that the Lord was wrath with the Jews not due to the so-called original sin of Adam as professed by St. Paul and others subsequently. Factually, it was due to the reason that the Jews themselves rebelled against the Lord and refused to turn to Him repentantly. To ameliorate the disgusting plight of Israel, the Lord also indicated the corrective measures as detailed above. Aside from the guidance, the Lord also assured the Jews that their sins will be forgiven provided they repent and resolve to do good in future. The Lord

therefore indicated the clear-cut way to salvation vide the verses Isaiah 1:16-17 quoted above. Jews were also given the assurance that if they repent and do good thereafter, all their sins will be forgiven and they shall be reckoned sinless and white like snow. On the other hand, refusal to obey the commandments of the Lord would eventually lead to utter destruction of the city and the people of Judea and Jerusalem (Isa. 1:18-20).

History, however, bears testimony to the fact that instead of giving a positive response, the Jews refused to listen to the prophets. Instead of hearing right things, they desired only smooth things which could serve the self-interest of the Jews. They arrogantly told the prophets not to preach anything against the wishes of the people. This is evident from the following:

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. (Isa 30:9 -11 KJV)

Since the Jews were unwilling to desist from their evil ways, therefore the Lord disclosed to them the fate of good or evil as under:

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. (Isa 1:27-28 KJV)

The alternate rendering of the above verses in the GNB makes it easier to understand:

Because the LORD is righteous, he will save Jerusalem and everyone there who repents. But he will crush everyone who sins and rebels against him; he will kill everyone who forsakes him. (Isa 1:27-28 GNB)

These were the circumstances when the Lord proclaimed that there will be no peace or even a positive reply for the evil men:

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. **There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.** (Isa 57:20-21 KJV)

It is therefore evident from the above that **the Lord demanded obedience to His commandments**

manifesting in righteousness, maintenance of peace, and social justice from His people. Jews were informed unambiguously that the Lord will not hear supplications of those who neither repented nor turned to Him by abstaining from their evil deeds. This makes it amply clear that unless and until the people stopped their evil doings and obeyed all the commandments of the Lord, they would not be saved through any other way. The word of the Lord therefore leaves no alternative for salvation except as laid down in the Torah and the teachings of the prophets of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament. Eternal principles of the Lord are final and unchanging for all nations and for all times to come. Those who suggest any shortcut or introduce some new formula of salvation made-easy are merely the deceivers misleading the people from the true guidance the Lord has been providing to mankind through His prophets from Adam to Jesus.

2. Salvation and Forgiveness of Sins

Isaiah made it abundantly clear that turning to the Lord repentantly was the first step towards forgiveness and ultimate salvation of man. The cause of affliction of the Jews was therefore explained by the Lord in the following words:

For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. (Isa 9:13 KJV)

The GNB translates the same as under:

The people of Israel have not repented; even though the LORD Almighty has punished them, they have not returned to him. (Isa 9:13 GNB)

As regards forgiveness, we learnt that **the Lord was always willing to forgive those who repent, do good and seek His mercy**. In addition to the verses Isa. 1:16-17 quoted earlier, we also find the determination of the Lord to uphold and glorify his Law.

The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; **he will magnify the law, and make it honourable**. (Isa 42:21 KJV)

For a better understanding of the verse quoted above, we reproduce its alternate version as under:

The LORD is a God who is eager to save, **so he exalted his laws and teachings**, and he wanted his people to honor them. (Isa 42:21 GNB)

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. (Isa 43:25 KJV)

The advice of the Lord to the people for seeking forgiveness and salvation is contained in the verses reproduced below:

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and **let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.** (Isa 55:6-7 KJV)

The LORD says to his people, "Do what is just and right, for soon I will save you. (Isa 56:1 GNB)

I gave my people life, and I will not continue to accuse them or be angry with them forever. (Isa 57:16 GNB)

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. (Isa 44:22 KJV)

The assurance to forgive the repentant sinners has also been repeated in the following:

I myself created the whole universe! I am pleased with those who are humble and repentant, who fear me and obey me. (Isa 66:2 GNB)

The Christian theory of original sin, man's captivity to sin, and the impossibility of salvation without redemptive sacrifice/crucifixion of Jesus and the necessity of faith in Jesus as the only savior of mankind therefore had no basis in the Old Testament. As against this we find that Jesus and John the last of the prophets in Israel, were simply the heralds of the coming Kingdom of God. As such, the central message of both these prophets was '**repent**' because the **Kingdom of God was near**. Actually it was their mission to prepare the people to welcome the Kingdom of God by turning away from their sins and by obeying all the commandments of the Lord. We therefore know that John did his best to lead the people towards the Lord, but unluckily he was assassinated before the completion of his mission.

Jesus too did not have enough time to preach and to lead the people towards establishment of a righteous society in Palestine. Being a herald of the coming Kingdom of God, he pronounced its imminence and preached to the people to repent and to do good for entering into the Kingdom of God. We therefore find that after the death/ascension of Jesus in 30 CE, the apostles and the followers of Jesus continued to preach the true faith of Jesus; while continuing to follow the Law of Moses being a part and parcel of the Jewish community. They were devotedly attached to the Temple and worshiped along the Jews till the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Where after the said nucleus of the true followers of Jesus suffered from extinction or dispersal throughout the world. As such, the authentic and the primitive center for true teachings about the faith, the life and the activities of Jesus stood destroyed or dispersed forever. After destruction of the Temple and dispersal of the original believers in Christ at Jerusalem, there was no one to preach true faith of Jesus along the lines of the Law of Moses and traditions of Israel in Palestine. The obliteration of the Christian society/church at the place of origin, i.e. Jerusalem, created a vacuum of faith in the region which was eventually occupied by the followers of St. Paul and the Evangelists from the Hellenistic soil.

Absolute Oneness of God

The main theme of all the revelation from the Lord has always been the absolute oneness of the Lord God, as the only creator, evolver, and sustainer of all the heavens and earth. God is the only savior of mankind on earth and in the Hereafter. **Oneness of God therefore is the first and the final truth in the universe.** All the true prophets from Adam to Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) preached the same faith. Moses, the greatest of the prophets in Israel, was given the most celebrated Ten Commandments from the Lord. The the first and the most important among the commandments was as under:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deu 6:4-5 KJV)

It was therefore repeatedly impressed upon Israel that there was no other God besides the one and the only Lord God of the universe. To emphasize the absolute oneness, the Lord has been reminding Israel about all his great works and miracles that were performed only to rescue Israel from their slavery in Egypt. The Lord said:

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that **the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.** (Deu 4:35 KJV)

Soon after the verses quoted above, we find its substance repeated in different words:

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. (Deu 4:39 KJV)

It is evident from the above that oneness of God has always been the crux of the Old Testament, and all the prophets continued to rehearse the same faith to the people. Besides the oneness of the Lord, Such revelations also repeatedly stressed the fact that the Lord was the only savior of mankind and there was no one else like the Lord and no one could be compared to Him. The Lord, while addressing Jacob, said:

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. (Isa 43:10-12 KJV)

The clear-cut commandment of the Lord quoted above leaves no room for any other god either before or after the one and the only eternal Lord God of the universe. He has always been the only savior of the mankind when 'there was no strange god among Israel.' Be it Jesus or anyone else. There shall never be any other savior god except the Almighty at any time in future.

God is One and Unique

Absolute oneness and uniqueness of the Lord has been stressed repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. Due to

paucity of time and space at our disposal, we will confine ourselves only to Isaiah and quote herein below a few verses from Isaiah to elucidate the point.

Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; **that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;** (Isa 44:24 KJV)

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, (Isa 46:9 KJV)

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. (Isa 40:28 KJV)

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. (Isa 40:25 KJV)

To whom then will ye liken God? or **what likeness will ye compare unto him?** (Isa 40:18 KJV)

I am the LORD: that is my name: and **my glory will I not give to another,** neither my praise to graven images. (Isa 42:8 KJV)

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (Isa 46:5 KJV)

The concept that God created man in His own likeness has clearly been refuted in the verses quoted above. Similarly, the verse Isa. 42:6 and 46:5 dispel the concept of any equality or sharing of power and glory with the Lord by anyone else.

God the Savior, the Redeemer, and the Forgiver of Sins

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: (Isa 45:5 KJV)

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (Isa 44:6 KJV)

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. (Isa 44:22 KJV)

In addition to the above, the Lord has stressed the point that He created the heavens and the universe without the help of anyone else:

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: **I am the LORD; and there is none else.** (Isa 45:18 KJV)

This verse and the verses quoted earlier contradict the proclamation of St. John that Jesus Christ was the logos (word) and everything was created through him, as asserted in the following:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (Joh 1:1-3 KJV)

In this respect we note that the Lord had already revealed to Israel that He does not allow His name to be dishonored or let anyone else share the glory with Him:

For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? **and I will not give my glory unto another.** Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; **I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.** **Mine** hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and **my right hand hath spanned the heavens:** when I call unto them, they stand up together. (Isa 48:11-13 KJV)

The Foretold Messenger had to Establish the Kingdom of God

Isaiah was a great prophet who lived during the period when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah. This was a period of turmoil and trouble when Judah was threatened and invaded by Assyria and Israel. People of Judah were morally corrupt. They disobeyed the commandments of the Lord and refused to repent. They also suffered from the loss of trust in the Lord. Isaiah therefore received the word of the Lord as under:

Isa 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters:

they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. (Isa 1:2-9 KJV)

In addition to the above, the Lord also expressed His disgust over the disobedience of the Jews and told them that

Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isa 1:15-18 KJV)

After showing His hatred about the sinful activities of the Jews, the Lord disclosed His action plan as detailed below:

24-a Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: 25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: (Isa. 1:24-a-25 KJV)

The Lord also conveyed to the Jews that:

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. (Isa 1:27-28 KJV)

A thorough study of the book of Isaiah reveals that a substantial portion contains only a stern warning with fresh reminder of the basics to guide the people for all times to come. Belief in absolute oneness of God, utmost trust in

Him as the only and the ultimate savior and obedience to all the commandments of the Lord were the fundamentals of permanent validity and abiding truth. Righteousness, social justice and abstention from the prohibitions imposed by the Lord were the rules of conduct to win the favor of the Lord. All this boils down to the guiding principle that instead of self service man must serve the Lord and submit his will to the will of the Lord. Man has been guided to live his life on earth in accordance with the Law of the Lord. Man must therefore live his life on earth in accordance with the Law of the Lord. God, however, did not put the man under any compulsion and granted him freedom to choose between the good and bad. Every individual is therefore under the test and trial of the Lord who will judge all his activities in accordance with the commandments given to him. There is no exception to the rule because 'God treats everyone on the same basis' (Acts 10:34-b).

It transpires from the above that the ultimate truth and ever abiding word of God cannot be put aside on the basis of interpretations of certain oracles in the Old Testament. No human reasoning or interpretation can abrogate clear-cut and confirmed commandment of the Almighty. As against this, we observe that the Christology, developed by St. Paul and his followers, clearly contradicts the ever enduring word of the Lord in the Old Testament. Absolute oneness of the Lord has always been the main theme of the Old Testament and we cannot change the same by super imposing some other god or savior besides the one and the only Lord God of the universe. It was stressed repeatedly in the Old Testament that the Lord was extremely jealous of any rivals with Him and He vehemently refuses to share His glory with others. Qur'an too testifies the same absolute oneness of the Lord as contained in the Old Testament. Every Muslim has to testify the same, for example:

اشهد ان لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له واشهد ان محمدا عبده ورسوله

I testify that there is no god but Allah, the one and the only God having no other gods besides Him, I also testify that Prophet Muhammad is slave and a prophet of the Lord.

And also

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ. اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ. لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ. وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him. (Al-Qur'an, 112.001-004 (Al-Ikhlās [Sincerity]))

Like all the true prophets of the Lord from Adam to Jesus, Muslims also believe that Almighty Allah (El, Eloh, Elohim, Jehovah or any other good name that you may call Him) is the only creator and sustainer of the universe who is omnipotent and unique in all respects. All human beings are merely the slaves of the Lord. Man must therefore put his trust in the Lord and obey His commandments meticulously. No oracles or any wishful interpretation can therefore release the man from his responsibilities to his master and creator. By proposing a son to the Lord or making him Almighty savior for mankind is clear-cut negation of the teachings of Jesus and all other genuine prophets of the Lord before him. Human reasoning or interpretation of the oracles can never attain any certainty at all, and cannot therefore be allowed to gain any superiority over the commonly accepted and affirmed word of the Lord.

As against the above, we find that the Evangelists have ignored the affirmed the teachings of the Old Testament merely by human maneuvering of certain words of the scripture in a special manner. In this respect we shall produce two examples from Isaiah to show how the oracles have been used out of their context and without any justification or relevance to Jesus in the following.

First one pertained to the period when Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, attacked Jerusalem and King Ahaz of Judah trembled severely on hearing the news. Through Isaiah, the Lord God conveyed to Ahaz to endure in faith because the invaders will not be able to capture Jerusalem. The Lord also gave him a sign as under:

Isa 7:14 Well then, the Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel.' 15 By the time he is old enough to make his own decisions, people will be drinking milk and eating honey. 16 Even before that time comes, the lands of those two kings who terrify you will be deserted. (Isa 7:14-16 GNB)

Anyone who studies the entire Chapter 7 of Isaiah will realize that the context in which this message was conveyed made it specific only to the time and events pertaining to the besiege of Jerusalem during the reign of King Ahaz. The prediction was amply fulfilled within a few years and the invaders had to withdraw from Judea without any success. In this respect, we note that St. Matthew in his eagerness to authenticate and sanctify the birth of Jesus has utilized the afore-stated oracle against the time, the context, and the actual fulfillment of the same. The oracle therefore neither gives any prediction about Jesus nor can be upheld as a proof of the virgin birth of the Immanuel of the Old Testament nor Jesus of the New one. Anyhow, we find Matthew supporting his contention mainly on the prediction stated above and as a fulfillment of the same.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Mat 1:22-23 KJV)

Factually, an objective study of Chap. 7 of Isaiah shows no relevance of the oracles in Isa. 7:14-16 to the birth of Jesus. The context of the prediction makes it specific only to the event of attack on Jerusalem during the period of King Ahaz. It pertained only to some ordinary woman of Judea who was pregnant at the time of the besiege and she was going to give birth to a child to be named Immanuel. It was further revealed that by the time the said child started understanding between good and bad, the Judeans will be released of the trouble. Perhaps the essence of the prediction was the time period within which Israel and Assyria were foretold to withdraw their assault without any success. The prediction was fulfilled accordingly and Jerusalem was relieved of the trouble about 3 years after the besiege. Immanuel was probably some ordinary child of Israel who was neither a prophet nor a messiah of Israel. Besides serving as a sign to denote extent of the time period for fulfillment of the prediction, the foretold Immanuel had no other importance as a figure to determine the climax of faith or fulfillment of the covenant. The said child can also not be taken as a prodigy to the god incarnate to be worshiped by the world. In view of the above, we feel that the utilization of the said oracle to

sanctify the birth of Jesus or to elevate him on that account has no justification at all. Modern scholarship does not agree that the afore-stated prediction can in any way be applied to sanctify the virgin birth of Jesus. In our view, Mathew has taken too much liberty to use the said oracle to support the miraculous birth of Jesus. Avoiding elaborate reasoning by different scholars, it will suffice here to reproduce only the contents of a footnote in the GNB pertaining to the verse quoted above:

YOUNG WOMAN: the Hebrew word here translated "young woman" is not the specific term for "virgin", but refers to any young woman of marriageable age. The use of "virgin" in amt. 1.23 reflects a Greek translation of the Old Testament, made some 500 years after Isaiah. IMMANUEL: This name in Hebrew means "God is with us." (P. 673)

This shows that the word "almah" means only a young woman and not a virgin as interpreted by Mathew. The prediction stood already fulfilled during the life of Ahaz (Isa. 7:15-16). We therefore feel that it is unfair to apply this prediction against the time and context of the same merely to serve the self interest of the Hellenistic writers to develop their own brand of the Christianity.

Jeremiah and the Covenant

After Isaiah, we proceed to study Jeremiah who too was a great prophet of Israel. The *Oxford Annotated Bible* records that the ministry of Jeremiah began in about 627 BC and it ended some time after 580 BC probably in Egypt.

Study of Jeremiah reveals that he was much concerned about the rewards and punishments, the recompense for good or evil and faithfulness or disobedience of his people. **He criticized Judah severely for its worship of gods other than the Lord.** The first paragraph of the introduction to Jeremiah in the *Good News Bible* introduces the prophet in the following manner:

The prophet Jeremiah lived during the latter part of the seventh century and the first part of the sixth century BC. During his long ministry he warned God's people of **the catastrophe that was to fall upon the nation because of their idolatry and sin.** He lived to see this prediction come true with the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian king,

Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of the city and the Temple, and the exile to Babylonia of Judah's king and many of the people. He also foretold the eventual return of the people from exile and the restoration of the nation.

Jeremiah was a sensitive man who had deep affection for his people. He was therefore deeply perturbed about the sinfulness and corruption of the people, and in his utmost despair he prayed to the Lord to revive his works of old to save the nation in the times to come. The Lord, however, disclosed to him that all the inflictions on Israel and Judah were due to the fact that instead of worshiping one and the only Lord God of their ancestors, the people had started worshiping new gods and worthless idols. As such, **they had changed their gods**. Jeremiah was dismayed due to the fact that the Jews were morally depraved, they disobeyed the commandments of the Lord and also started complaining against Him. It was therefore obvious that the nation was doomed to be destroyed. To ward off the calamity, however, the Lord advised them **to ask for the ancient paths and desist from following the ways of other nations. The Lord advised them to keep the covenant. They were also advised not to abandon the teachings of the Lord in any case**. Jeremiah therefore disclosed to his people that:

The LORD says: "What accusation did your ancestors bring against me? What made them turn away from me? **They worshiped worthless idols** and became worthless themselves. (Jer 2:5 GNB)

Jeremiah continued to reveal further that:

Go west to the island of Cyprus, and send someone eastward to the land of Kedar. You will see that **nothing like this has ever happened before. No other nation has ever changed its gods**, even though they were not real. But my people have exchanged me, the God who has brought them honor, for gods that can do nothing for them. (Jer 2:10-11 GNB)

It was further added that:

Israel, don't wear your feet out, or let your throat become dry from **chasing after other gods**. But you say, 'No! I can't turn back. I have loved foreign gods and will go after them.' " (Jer 2:25 GNB)

Chapter 5 of Jeremiah's book is entirely devoted to the sin of Jerusalem. For ready reference we quote hereunder a few verses from the same:

The LORD asked, "**Why should I forgive the sins of my people? They have abandoned me and have worshiped gods that are not real.** I fed my people until they were full, but they committed adultery and spent their time with prostitutes. (Jer 5:7 GNB)

(12) The LORD's people have denied him and have said, "He won't really do anything. We won't have hard times; we won't have war or famine." (13) They have said that the prophets are nothing but windbags and that they have no message from the LORD. The LORD God Almighty said to me, "Jeremiah, because these people have said such things, I will make my words like a fire in your mouth. The people will be like wood, and the fire will burn them up." (14) (SEE 5:13) (15) People of Israel, the LORD is bringing a nation from far away to attack you. It is a strong and ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know. (16) Their archers are mighty soldiers who kill without mercy. (17) They will devour your crops and your food; they will kill your sons and your daughters. They will slaughter your flocks and your herds and destroy your vines and fig trees. The fortified cities in which you trust will be destroyed by their army. (18) The LORD says, "Yet even in those days I will not completely destroy my people. (19) When they ask why I did all these things, tell them, Jeremiah, that just **as they turned away from me and served foreign gods in their own land, so they will serve strangers in a land that is not theirs.**" (Jer. 5:12-19 GNB)

In addition to the above, we also find that the Lord warned the people of their inequities and the warning ends as under:

The LORD said to his people, "Stand at the crossroads and look. **Ask for the ancient paths and where the best road is. Walk in it, and you will live in peace.**" But they said, "No, we will not!" (Jer. 6:16 GNB)

Thus, the Lord clearly advised the people to follow the ways of their righteous ancestors, i.e. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and other prophets of the old. This was the only course for their salvation and the only sure way to save the people from the disaster, which was about to come. Alas! The Jews flatly refused to follow the guidance from the Lord, due to which they were besieged, defeated, and destroyed by the

Chaldeans who killed most of the people and set the city of Jerusalem and the Temple on fire. About 70,000 of the survivors were driven away to Babylonia as captives of the war. All the gold at the temple and wealth of the people was taken away to Babylonia. The prophecy of the catastrophe was thus fulfilled exactly in accordance with the words of the Lord, while Prophet Jeremiah himself survived to witness the Word of Lord being fulfilled before him.

Worship of Idols

The study of Old Testament reveals that the Lord has always been jealous of any rivals with Him, be it in the shape of some partner, helper, associate or a son. People of the Book were therefore told clearly that **there were no other gods except the one and the only Lord God of the universe.** The Lord had no other gods besides Him nor had he any partners or associates to share the glory with Him. They were also told that it was naïve on the part of human beings to imagine any form for the formless or to claim any likeness with the one who was absolutely supreme and unique in all respects. The Lord therefore forbade the making or worshiping of any idols in whatever form they may be. Consequently, in chapter 7 the Lord expressed His hatred against the idols. He said:

"The people of Judah have done an evil thing. They have placed their idols, which I hate, in my Temple and have defiled it. (Jer. 7:30 GNB)

People of Israel, listen to the message that the LORD has for you. He says, "**Do not follow the ways of other nations; do not be disturbed by unusual sights in the sky,** even though other nations are terrified. (Jer. 10:1-2 GNB)

We therefore find that two points have been emphasized specifically in the verses quoted above.

One: That the people must not worship any gods except the Lord nor should they place the idols in the temple or worship them. Unluckily the Jews could not abstain from the same, due to which they had to face the consequences thereof. Subsequently, even the Christians introduced Jesus

and the Holy Ghost as two new gods and they started worshiping images of Jesus, Mary, and their saints in the church. All this was a flagrant violation of the constant and confirmed commandments of the Lord emanating from Moses and persisting till the death/ascension of Jesus Christ.

Two: That the Israelites were directed to obey the commandments of the Lord and to refrain from following the traditions of other nations around them (Deu. 18:9-21, Jer. 10:2)). It is on record that Israel very often loved to adopt the ways of worship of the nations around them. Subsequently, Paul and his followers paved the way for the people with a new doctrine which was easy and attractive to cope with the taste and requirements of the Roman world. They did so by amalgamating all that was pleasing to the people in Judaism, paganism, sun-cult, mythology and traditions of the Hellenized society, as well as, the mystery religions of the East. All this was done in clear-cut violation of the teachings of all the prophets of Israel who had insisted that the Israelites must always keep the covenant, obey all the commandments of the Lord, refrain from sin and injustice, and do only the things pleasing to the Lord.

St. Paul admittedly resorted to lies and promoted his faith at the cost of the truth. In his eagerness to win more followers, St. Paul and the Evangelists gave primacy to wining the people to their own ideology than to preach the truth (1-Cor. 9:19-22). They therefore outrightly rejected the faith and Law of Moses and of all prophets to develop a new faith by interpreting some oracles and predictions from the Old Testament and supporting the same with their visions, revelations, perversion of logic and reasoning. As such, much of their creed had no other proof except the so-called revelations and visions of Paul, Peter, and St. John the Evangelist which were relied upon to nullify the Law and the faith persisting since Moses up to about 40 years after the death/ascension of Jesus. We need not repeat here that the Lord had directed Israel again and again to keep the covenant with full faith in the Lord. They were warned **not to be disturbed by the unusual sights in the sky**. The actual history of early Christianity however shows that they attached no importance to the confirmed

Law and traditions of the old, but they preferred to follow the religious traditions and the Law of the Romans. The Lord had forbidden Israel to consult the seers or to pay any heed to the auguries, visions or omens of the so-called prophets, who told lies and perverted the words of God affirmed by all the true prophets of Israel. Even Jeremiah warned the people to stop living sinful lives and not to abandon the teachings of the Lord (Jeremiah 9:13). People were advised only to follow the true path of the Lord and to take care against the corruption in the text. The Lord said:

8) How can you say that you are wise and that you know my laws? **Look, the laws have been changed by dishonest scribes.** 9) Your wise men are put to shame; they are confused and trapped. **They have rejected my words; what wisdom do they have now?** (Jer. 8:8-9 GNB)

Jeremiah took pains to remind Israel that they were obliged only to obey the commandments of the Lord, and to keep full faith in Him in all the circumstances. The Israelites, however, ignored the admonition as above. They boldly ignored the firm foundations of their faith and set aside all statutes of the Law of Moses affirmed repeatedly by all the prophets of the Lord and also upheld by Jesus up to the end of his life on earth. In spite of clear-cut warnings from Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and others, the Israelites rejected the commandments of the Lord, while omens, oracles and prophecies gained primacy over the words of the covenant and unchangeable Law of the Lord. This trend caused a sharp diversion from the faith of Jesus, as well as, from the faith of the other prophets before him.

The new faith introduced by St. Paul was based merely on one sided interpretation of certain oracles from the Old Testament and by showing their fulfillment with the poetic imagination and allegorical interpretation of the events. An extensive use of Greek logic, religious cosmology, and pantheistic doctrine emanating from Timaeus, Parmenides, Plato, Plotinus, Philo and other Hellenistic philosophers was made to develop the Christology as the basis of the new religion. St. Paul preferred to seek guidance from the mystery religions of the Middle East and also assigned priority to Roman culture of pantheism, mythology, visions, auguries and omens. He obviously surpassed even Philo to interpret ordinary events in such a way that the allegory obliterates the actual facts pertaining to an event and the

allegory stands for an ultimate truth, instead of utter reality of the episode. It was Philo who was perhaps the main source of the Neo-Platonic pantheistic doctrine of religious cosmology suggesting that the world exists in the God and God in every manifestation in the world. In triune God of the Christianity, the same terminology has been utilized to show the relation of Jesus and the Holy Spirit with the believers. With faith in Christ, the Christians are assured to get all good things done in Christ working in them. They abide in Christ and Christ in them. Alternate uses of the Holy Spirit, the Christ and the Father to do everything good in the Christians is the main foundation of the theory of salvation developed by them. This doctrine relieves human beings from any test and trial or responsibility/accountability for the evil deeds. God or His spirit is supposed to work in them and to do all the good things pleasing to Him. Since the new doctrine has the special advantage of reversing all the responsibilities from man to god, be it Father, Son or the Holy Ghost; therefore it has received wide acceptance from the masses, irrespective of the fact that it has been based on wishful imagination than any confirmed revelation from the Lord.

It is worth-noting here that salvation of mankind by vicarious sacrifice of a hero dying and rising from the dead to give new life to himself and life as well as fertility to everything on earth, already had its similitude in the sun-god cults and also in the mystery religions like Mithraism, Buddhism, Hinduism and others. Since the new faith was akin to the belief of the Hellenistic society and it also included many allurements for them without any exertion, abstention or cost, therefore it soon started gaining popularity throughout the Roman world.

Cross was an ancient sign of the sun-cult in the region. In pre-Christian uses the Cross also stood for four directions with the center which meant the world or everything. Four spokes of the wheel were also taken as symbol of the sun. Both these meanings were present in the early Christian symbolism in which Christ was associated with sun and the Cross represented his rule over everything. Anyhow, there is hardly any mentions of Cross as an emblem of faith of the Christians up to the second century. Tertullian, the Christian theologian well known for his flare for

exaggeration was perhaps the only person who rights that the Christian used to trace the sign of Cross on their foreheads while putting on the cloths, while going to bed, or while going out to take up some new movement. Anyhow, there is no evidence that the Cross was widely and openly traced as such by the masses in the Christians.

Crucifixion had been acknowledged as a curse in Israel as well as in all the countries around the Mediterranean. It was a sign of ignominious death reserved for rebels, slaves, and criminals of inferior social status. St. Paul however aptly converted the negative into the positive by giving it a new interpretation which imagined the crucifixion of Jesus as a vicarious sacrifice for salvation of man. The new interpretation of St. Paul converted the episode of crucifixion and horrible death of Jesus into a triumphant death which brought to the Christians the promise of immortality in heaven. Thus, instead of an insignia of hatred and curse the Cross stood sanctified as a sign of salvation and an object of worship for the Christians. All such interpretations lacked support from the Old Testament and also had no evidence from historical events to justify the same. It was only the theory of easy salvation, promise of immortality in heaven, promised holiness of the believers in Christ, maximum permissiveness coupled with freedom from the obligations under the Law of Moses that provided a fascination to the masses to adopt the new faith. The new faith was also more attractive to the pagans and to the polytheist people in the Hellenized world because It was not at variance with most of the existing traditions in the region.

The veneration of the Cross started touching its summit in about 325 AD; when Constantine the Great introduced the Cross as an emblem of Christianity and made it obligatory on the Christians to adopt it as an essential part of their worship. It is said that in about AD 312, Constantine marching on Rome to deal with his rival clement to the throne, when he saw a towering cross of light in the sky with the words 'by this conquer'. He defeated his rival and attributed his victory to the Christian God. Anyhow, Constantine, in spite of his leaning towards Christianity, remained a pagan worshiper of the sun throughout his life. He presided the council of Nicaea in AD 325 not as a Christian but as a pagan emperor but it was

he who gave his official approval to the emblem of Cross and the Trinity, i.e. a belief in co-eternity and co-equality of God the Father, god the Son and god the Holy Ghost as distinct components of the godhead. He did not baptize himself in the faith up to AD 337. It was some moments before his death that he baptized himself as a Christian and accepted the faith. Constantine had been a staunch worshipper of the sun, therefore it was natural for him to see the sign of Cross in the sky as a motif of the sun-god denoting his success. Consequently, on his leaning towards Christianity, he introduced the same motif of Cross to Christianity about 300 years after the death/ascension of the Christ. The worship of Jesus and the Cross stood enforced since then and the so-called Christians started worshipping new gods besides the Lord God of the universe and rejecting all the teachings and true faith of Jesus as well as all the prophets before him. They attached no importance to admonition from all the prophets of Israel and clear-cut warning of Jeremiah as under:

1) Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: 2) Thus saith the LORD, **Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven;** for the heathen are dismayed at them. (Jer. 10:1-2 KJV)

About 600 years before Jeremiah and 1200 years before Jesus, Moses too warned Israel to desist from following the ways of the pagan nations in the land the God was giving to them. He forewarned them that:

(9) "When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, **don't follow the disgusting practices of the nations that are there.** (10) Don't sacrifice your children in the fires on your altars; and don't let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells (11) or charms, and don't let them consult the spirits of the dead. (12) The LORD your God hates people who do these disgusting things, and that is why he is driving those nations out of the land as you advance. (13) **Be completely faithful to the LORD.**" (Deu. 18:9-13 GNB)

Although the sanctity of Cross and the idea of three gods permeated the minds of the Christians since the time of St. Paul, yet it was Constantine who accorded official approval to the doctrine of Trinity instead of one and the only Lord

God worshiped by Jesus and his ancestors. Constantine was the Roman Emperor who accorded official approval to the faith in Trinity with three co-equal and co-eternal partners in the godhead. In addition to the above, Constantine also stopped the observation of Sabbath and replaced the same with Sunday which was the day of the sun-god worshiped by him since his childhood. Thus, they completely profaned the Sabbath (Eze. 20:13). This was a clear-cut violation of the commandment of the Lord quoted below:

(19) I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; (20) And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. (Eze 20:19-20 KJV)

Subsequently, those who differed from the edicts of the empire were either expatriated, annihilated or persecuted severely. Consequently, Abrahamic religion of strict monotheism stood replaced by tri-theism, while the Cross was introduced as the emblem of the religion of Christianity, and the same was worshiped like the idols of the pagans. It is, however, pertinent to note that in spite of a sharp diversion from the strict monotheism of the Prophets of Israel, St. Paul and his followers did not declare themselves to be polytheists. They have destroyed oceans of ink to explain the theory of Three in One, i.e. God the Father, god the Son and god the Holy Ghost. The Christians insist that these three persons are one in the Triune God and God the Father, god the Son and god the Holy Ghost are co-equal and co-eternal in all respect. Although no logic, reason or basic principles of mathematics can prove the assumed oneness of the three. Yet the Christian sages failing to uphold their conviction take refuge under the theory of divine mystery which they say cannot be explained but has to be as an ultimate truth.

People rejected the Word of the Lord

Jeremiah himself was a witness to the fact that the **Jews rejected the word of God**. His prediction therefore related to immediate as well as the distant future in the similar circumstances. He conveyed the message of the Lord pertaining to his own times and also foretold about the

time when people will again prefer the words of men like St. Paul, St. John, Athanasius, and Constantine the emperor of Rome over the commandments of the Lord. Jeremiah therefore expressed remorsefully that:

The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them? (Jer .8:9 KJV)

Jeremiah pointed out that not only ordinary people but even the prophets and the priests cheated the people (Jer. 8:10). In response to the concern expressed by Jeremiah, therefore the Lord gave him the rejoinder as under:

The LORD answered, "This has happened because my people have abandoned the teaching that I gave them. They have not obeyed me or done what I told them. Instead, they have been stubborn and have worshiped the idols of Baal as their ancestors taught them to do. (Jer 9:13-14 GNB)

After a few verses, it is added that:

I had commanded them to keep the covenant, but they refused. So I brought on them all the punishments described in it." (Jer. 11:8b GNB)

The utmost concern of the Lord about Israel is also evident from the direction of the Lord, as under:

Set up signs and mark the road; find again the way by which you left. Come back, people of Israel, come home to the towns you left. How long will you hesitate, faithless people? I have created something new and different, as different as a woman protecting a man." (Jer. 31:21-22 GNB)

The closing lines of the introduction to Jeremiah in the GNB have also highlighted the message of hope for the people of the Lord. It was the prediction about a new covenant with a new nation. In this respect, we observe that St. Paul and his followers interpreted the oracles in Jeremiah and also from some other parts of O.T. only to nullify the certified teachings of the Law and faith of all the prophets including Jesus himself. They took lot of exertion to prove that all the prophecies in the Old Testament stood fulfilled in Jesus. The converts to Christianity were made to believe that the Lord through the Holy Ghost shall be doing in them all that was pleasing to Him. The theme of fulfillment of all the prophecies in Jesus has also been utilized as the main foundation of faith of the Christians. The last sentence of

the introduction to Jeremiah in the GNB also conveys the same:

Some of the greatest words in the book point beyond Jeremiah's own troubled time to the day when there would be a new covenant, one that God's people would keep without a teacher to remind them, because it would be written on their hearts (31:31-34)

No doubt the Lord had promised something new and different (Jer. 31:22), yet we have reasons to believe that the messenger of covenant was not likely to come from Israel. They had abandoned the Lord and refused to do what was right and just. In spite of repeated admonition from the Lord, the people of Judah and Jerusalem refused to turn to the Lord. They were stubborn and defiant against the commandments given to them. They continued to live sinful lives, worshiped worthless idols and refused to listen to the prophets. They maltreated and killed many of their prophets and ultimately they murdered John and Jesus, the last prophets of Israel, which brought an end to prophecy in Israel. Ch. 8 of Ezekiel is entirely devoted to the idolatry of Jerusalem and Jerusalem has been condemned as a whore or a prostitute (Eze. 16:23-43). There are numerous other references indicating the same, e.g. Jer. 3:2,6,8,9; Jer. 7:11-15; Jer. 12:7; Jer. 13:9-10 etc. As regards the message of hope for Israel, the same perhaps contains unauthorized insertion of 'Israel' or 'Jerusalem' in place of the actual words of the prophecy, as discussed in detail elsewhere in the book. As against the Christian creed, we find that the oracles in Jeremiah pertaining to the new covenant are merely a continuation of the prophecies made by Jacob (Gen. 49:10) predictions of Moses (Deu. 18:9-21) and his blessings (Deu. 33:2-4); which identify Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as the prophet of the covenant ratified with the Ishmaelites and the Arabs at Mt. Paran (Makkah). We shall discuss the same in detail herein below, but before moving further it will be useful to refresh ourselves with the main contents of the message and the principle assignment of Jeremiah as it transpires from the book assigned to him:

That the people must keep the covenant and desist from worshipping other gods. They must not follow the ways of other nations (Jer. 10:2), unfaithful Israel must come back to the Lord and they should abstain from idolatry (Jer.

3:12). They must ask for the ancient paths and obey all the commandments of the Lord.

People should stop living sinful lives (Jer. 18:11). They should do what is right and just (Jer. 22:3). Unfaithful Israel must turn to the Lord who is merciful (Jer. 3:12). Instead of relying on omens, auguries, or sights in the sky, they must keep full faith in the Lord.

That at some future time the Lord will make a new covenant with the people which will be different from the first one in the sense that the people will observe it and the Lord will also preserve it forever by writing it on their hearts.

The New Covenant

Jeremiah predicted about the new covenant which would be different from the old one in the sense that it would be observed by the people properly. It will be written on the hearts of the people to preserve it for all times to come. This covenant will not be broken either by the perversion of its contents or by worship of other gods in the way the Israelites worshiped other gods including the Golden calf due to which the covenant stood broke with the Lord. The prediction of Jeremiah therefore was a message of hope that a fresh covenant will be ratified with new people who will not fail to abide by it. They also shall preserve all its contents. Anyhow, the new and the everlasting covenant must essentially be a renewal and restoration of the old covenant in its pristine purity and with modifications to cope with the requirement of all the people in the world for all times to come. The prediction therefore does not contain any provision for abrogation of Law or introduction of new gods as partners in the divinity. We therefore believe that the oracles of Jeremiah suggested only a renewal of the unchanging commandments of the same Lord God of the universe with a new nation who will not behave like the people of Israel. The prophecies of Jeremiah cannot therefore be stretched too far to introduce two new gods as pleaded by Paul and the Evangelists following him. Jesus himself declared that he did not come to destroy the Law or the prophets. He stressed that not an iota from the Law will be changed till everything is fulfilled. This suggests that

Law of the Lord must remain in operation till everything on earth is brought to an end and human beings are resurrected to stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment. In view of the above, we cannot agree with the interpretations made by the Christians to show fulfillment of the oracles in Jesus who never ratified any new covenant with the people of Israel till his death/ascension. Relevant verses from Jeremiah are therefore quoted hereunder for ready reference and fresh evaluation of the same:

(29) When that time comes, people will no longer say, 'The parents ate the sour grapes, But the children got the sour taste.'

(30) Instead, those who eat sour grapes will have their own teeth set on edge; and everyone will die because of their own sin."

(31) The LORD says, "The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

(32) **It will not be like the old covenant** that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant.

(33) The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: **I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

(34) **None of them will have to teach a neighbor to know the LORD**, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the LORD, have spoken." (Jer. 31:29-34 GNB)

(32:38) Then they will be my people, and I will be their God.

(39) I will give them a single purpose in life: to honor me for all time, for their own good and the good of their descendants.

(40) I will make an eternal covenant with them. I will never stop doing good things for them, and I will make them fear me with all their heart, so that they will never turn away from me. (Jer. 32:38-40 GNB)

Salient features of the prediction are as under:

1. That every man will die for his own iniquity.
2. That God will make new covenant at a future time.

3. New covenant will not be like the Old one which people brake
4. The people will keep the covenant without the help of a teacher to remind them.
5. The covenant will be written on the hearts of the people.
6. The Lord will be their Lord and they will be His people
7. The Lord will forgive their iniquities and remember their sins no more.
8. If the Israelites cast aside the ordinances of the Lord they will cease to be a nation.

Before proceeding further it will be proper to elaborate the points given above.

1) Every man will die for his own iniquity

First of all, we note that the concept of sin of Adam and defilement of man as derived from Gen. 3:15-20 was somehow pervading in the minds of Israel. Subsequently, St. Paul and his followers amplified the said concept in a more horrible manner to show that man was born in sin and became hopelessly captive to sin forever. They professed that all the descendants of Adam had inherited the sin from him. Man as such had become leprous and debilitated to do anything good to get rid of sin and death as penalty or wages of the sin. Through Jeremiah therefore the Lord **dispelled the concept that man was born in sin or he was captive to the same** (Jer. 31:29). His words also leave no ground for the theory of man's captivity to sin. Firstly, it was clarified that no one will suffer for the evil deeds of others even if they were their ancestors. Secondly, it was declared that **everyone will die because of his own sin**. The word of God as such absolves each and every human being from the so-called original sin of Adam in the Garden. It suggests that everyone is born with purity of nature, but subsequently the original purity of birth can be affected under the influence of the inherited traditions, cultural and

social environments and the convictions of the parents and other members of the society. It is therefore one's own choice between good and bad that make him sinful or the righteous one. To cope with the circumstances, the Lord bestowed every human being with the intellect and also with His guidance through various prophets sent to each nation in the world. The Lord did not desert the human beings even for a moment and kept them provided with adequate guidance at all times during man's life on earth. As such every individual entered the world with the purity of his nature and intellect to have his own chance for an independent choice between good and bad in accordance with the guidance provided by the Lord. Man therefore must blame his own self instead of weeping over the sin of Adam or to blame him for bringing sin or death on his descendants. The man was created as a mortal and sin or virtue does not change the nature of his creation. The concept of sin bringing death is baseless. The Qur'an has refuted the concept as under:

Every soul shall have a taste of death: And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life): For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.

Al-Qur'an, 003.185 (Aal-E-Imran [The Family of Imran])

Hence, the Lord has provided for adequate guidance to each man on earth, so that he may use his intellect to adopt the straight path towards the Lord. No excuse of Adams sin can absolve any individual who ignored the guidance from the Lord and served his own interest instead of bowing before the will of the Lord.

The concept, that all human beings had become defiled due to inheritance of the original sin from Adam and the doctrine that human beings cannot be redeemed without faith in the redemptive atonement i.e. the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, therefore stands refuted by the Lord. It also leaves no basis for the wishful thinking that the sins of the people can be carried away by Jesus Christ or someone else. The word of God i.e. 'But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge' (Jer. 31:30) is loud and clear. It clearly negates the concepts of any saving sacrifice as professed by the Christians. Everyone will have to account

for his own doings, and no one will be punished due to the misdeeds of others even if they happen to be their direct ancestors. As such, the basic principle for salvation remains constant and unchanged in the old, as well as, in the new covenant.

In addition to the above, the Lord also revealed through Jeremiah that no goodness of the righteous people will save the sinful from the consequences of their deeds. The goodness of the righteous persons will only save their own lives and they will not be able to save even their own children. Jeremiah therefore records that:

(12) The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, (13) Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: (14) **Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.** (15) If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: (16) Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, **they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters;** they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. (17) Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: (18) Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. (19) Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: (20) Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; **they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.** (Eze 14:12-20 KJV)

The word of the Lord quoted above dispels any provision of a mediator or a savior to save the sinful by taking his sins on him. Each individual must face the test and trial before the Lord. No righteous person will be able to present himself as a substitute for anyone else because the goodness of the righteous one will not save anyone else except his own life.

As regards the assurance of easy salvation through the doctrine of Paul, we have no good reason to ignore the admonition from the Lord in the following words:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. (Jer 23:16 KJV)

I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. (Jer 23:21 KJV)

How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, **they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart**; (Jer 23:26 KJV)

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. (Jer 23:28 KJV)

Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. (Jer 23:32 KJV)

It is pertinent to note here that the teachings of Paul and his followers about the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Ghost contradict the strict monotheist teachings of Moses and all true prophets of Israel including Jesus himself. Salvation merely through faith in the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ is yet another invention of the Paulian group who repudiate the teachings of the Lord to worship no one except the Lord because there were no other gods besides Him. Similarly, Paul's theory of salvation merely through faith in Jesus Christ and not by doing good deeds in accordance with the commandments of the Lord contradicts the world of the Almighty and all the basic teachings of faith conveyed by all the true prophets of the Lord on earth. Here St. Paul has clearly overruled the authentic commandments of the sovereign Lord. As such, when there are two contradictory statements about any particular issue only one of the statements has the chance to be correct. The other must essentially be incorrect. It is therefore for our Christian friends to decide whether the word of God and the faith of Moses, Jesus and all other prophets was incorrect or it was Paul alone who was at fault. We may also recall that St. Paul never had a chance to see or hear Jesus during his life on earth. Jesus never chose him as an apostle for Israel or for the gentiles. Even if we agree with Paul's self claimed

apostleship, it gives him authority only to rehearse to two teachings of Jesus, Moses and all the prophets of the Lord before them. No apostle can ever claim superiority over the Lord or the prophets nor can he abrogate an iota from the Law.

It is also interesting to note that Jeremiah contains adequate guidance in respect of visions, divination and prophecies made by false prophets to mislead the people. The shortcut to emancipation just by faith in Jesus Christ and the salvation made easy by the doctrine of St. Paul is not from the Lord. Such teachings contradict the foundation of faith in all the covenants of the Lord with mankind since Adam to Jesus. Since the Lord is absolutely perfect in all respects, therefore He is an unchanging God and His words last forever. Under the circumstances, the shortcut to salvation suggested by Paul cannot be the word of God. The new way to salvation if from the Lord shows lack of perfection and constancy in Him. We also cannot assume that the Lord learns from the trial and error. We therefore believe that all-knowing, all-wise Lord was always perfect in all respects, He could never be an author of confusion nor the one who may give any commandment contradicting the other. Our study of the covenant therefore testifies the fact that all prophets came with the same message from the Lord and even the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah must also be in consonance with the old ones. In view of the above we find the prophecies of Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk fulfilled entirely in the, final and the everlasting covenant of the Lord ratified at Mount Paran (Makkah) with Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his followers which affirms the true contents of the Old Testament especially the belief in one and the only Lord God of the universe and obedience to all His commandments as per guidance received from the true prophets of the Lord. This is the only way to salvation as proclaimed by all the prophets from Adam to Jesus as well as Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and there has never been any basic difference between the teachings of the Lord received through all the true prophets of the Almighty.

2) God will make new covenant at a future time

Our study of the covenant tells us that the Lord ratified His covenants at different nations at different times in the history of the world. Absolute oneness of the Lord, obedience to all His commandments, and worship of no one else than the Lord has always been the constant factors in the covenant. Moses perhaps was the only prophet who was deputed to rescue Israel from the force labor and slavery under the Egyptians. He therefore led them out of Egypt, guided them, and ratified a covenant between the Lord and all the people of Israel at Sinai. The Israelites however broke the covenant by disobeying the commandments of the Lord and specifically by worshiping the golden calf instead of the Lord their God. Subsequently, they refused to enter the land of Canaan, rebelled against Moses and the Lord, and complained against them. The Lord therefore announced the punishment on them and said:

Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, (Num 14:29 KJV)

The Lord also emphasized His message by saying that:

And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. Num. 14:33 KJV)

I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. (Num. 14:35 KJV)

It is on record that 'the Lord struck them with a disease and they died' (Num. 14:37). After the death of all the people of 20 years or above in the wilderness, it was entirely a new generation of Israel who were the participants of the covenant renews and ratified in the land of Moab (Deu. 29:1-29). Since all the Israelites entered into the covenant with the Lord, therefore they became the people of the Lord. It is pertinent to note here that the new covenant in the land of Moab had the same Ten Commandments and unchanging word of the Lord which endures forever. After Moses there had been thousands of prophets of Israel including David, Elia, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, John, Jesus and others. All of them rehearsed the same teachings of the Lord without changing

an iota from the Law of Moses. Jeremiah himself spent his entire life preaching to the people to worship no one except the Lord and to obey all his commandments wholeheartedly. He impressed upon them to desist from worshiping other gods and to stop living sinful lives. He advised them to avoid idolatry, to observe the Law strictly and to do what is right and just. He conveyed the message of the Lord to the people that they must 'stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient paths and where the best road is. Walk in it, and you will live in peace.' As such, the entire teachings of Jeremiah boil down to the obedience of one and the only Lord God of the universe and to worship no one except Him. This was the only remedy suggested by the Lord through Jeremiah to avert the impending catastrophe on the people of Judea and Jerusalem.

In view of the above, it is naïve to think that Jeremiah could ever think of predicting any new covenant containing abrogation of the Law of the Lord and introducing two rivals with the Lord to be worshiped instead of the Lord. It is also strange to think that the Lord or His new found associates, i.e. Jesus and the Holy Ghost will absolve the human beings from their responsibility towards the Lord by taking it on them to do everything in them.

The foundation faith i.e. worship of one and the only Lord God of the universe, obedience to His commandments, establishment of Justice and abstention from idolatry and all the immoralities prohibited by the Lord must always remain as constant factors in the teachings received from the unchanging God whose word endures forever. The Lord must not contradict His own teachings. The variable factors in the covenant had always been different nations, their prophets, circumstances and certain modifications on the periphery of the constant factors of covenant only to cope with the requirements of the time and the people concerned. The new covenant must therefore be an advancement over the previous one and the renewal in its pure form with necessary modifications if any. As regards the teachings of St. Paul, they contradict all the earlier teachings of the Lord, destroy the Law, and falsify all the prophets before him. There is no evidence that Jesus ever chose St. Paul as an apostle during his life. His self claimed

apostleship for the gentiles is against the clear-cut announcement of Jesus that he was not sent to anyone except the lost sheep of Israel. He also forbade his apostles to go to anyone except Israel. In view of the above, the trance of St. Paul during his journey to Damascus cannot overrule the proclamation of Jesus, especially keeping in view the fact St. Paul has himself confessed the untruth in his preaching.

The new covenant predicted by Jeremiah must therefore be taken as an affirmation of the earlier prophecies of Jacob (Gen. 49:10), promise of the Lord (Deu. 18:9-21) and the final blessings of Moses (Deu. 33:2-4). It must therefore strengthen the basics in the previous covenants. Even a minor change cannot be effected by any prophet unless he receives specific instructions from the Almighty. No oracles from any prophet can abrogate the specific and the confirmed word of God. The message from the Lord conveyed through His prophets has always been the same in its basics, and its uniformity in the essentials must always remained unchanged. The word of God has always been explicit and definite without any ambiguity in it. As against this, the oracles usually provide a vision of the future without specifying the exact time, the place, and the details of the future events. Most of the oracles are subject to interpretation and no Law can ever be abrogated on the basis of a vision which can be interpreted in various ways. Aside from the true prophets, we also find many oracles from seers, diviners and the magicians in the world. Occasionally they also happened to be true. Anyhow, such oracles cannot be ranked as equal to the revelation from the Lord which contains an everlasting truth conveyed through no one else than the true prophet of the Lord. As against the ordinary people, the oracles of the prophets always contain the truth, yet they usually require a correct interpretation to understand the same. Oracles therefore must always be subordinate to the word of God, His commandments or the Law revealed through the prophets in the specific words without any ambiguity in it. /// we therefore find no justification for Paul and his followers to utilize the prediction of Jeremiah as a foundation of faith for the new covenant introducing two additional persons in the godhead and their worship as co-eternal and co-equal partners in the divinity of the Lord. The new faith also contradicts the repeated assertions of the Old Testament

that the Lord is one and there are no other gods besides Him. It also negates the fact that the Lord is an unchanging God and His word endures forever. As such, the absolute oneness of the sovereign Lord and obedience to His commandments must be upheld as constant factors in each covenant with mankind and anything suggesting a change in the same cannot be the word of the Lord.

As regards the teachings of St. Paul and the Evangelists following him, they have no support from the Old Testament or from the history of faith since Adam to Jesus to elevate a man or an angel to divinity by incarnation or some other jugglery of words. The doctrine of Christology therefore is simply the product of imaginative and allegorical interpretation of certain events with the help of some oracles in the Old Testament and showing them as a reality or an ultimate truth, instead of wishful conception serving the self-interest of St. Paul and his followers. Teachings of St. Paul and his followers went a long way to assure glory, power, happiness, sanctification, holiness, salvation to the believers which promoted the sale of Christianity in the Hellenized world. The edifice of the lofty structure of the new faith was raised on the ruins of the true faith of Jesus Christ and the teachings of all prophets before him.

3) New covenant will not be like the Old one which people brake

We note that verse Jer. 31:32 foretells that the new covenant will be different from the old one, in the sense that the people will not break it like Israel and their ancestors. The first covenant stood broke immediately after ratification at Mount Sinai, when the then generation of Israel deserted the Lord and started worshiping the Golden Calf. They also rebelled against the Lord and openly violated His commandments. The Old Testament has numerous references about the repeated sinfulness of Israel, their worship of other gods and rejection of the Lord God of the universe. It also contains lot of evidence from Isaiah and Jeremiah that the lying pen of scribes change the word of Lord. This shows that the Israelites failed to abide by the commandments of the Lord contained in the

covenant; while on the other hand, they corrupted the text of the covenant by unauthorized additions, deletions, interpolations and concealments. The Lord therefore foretold Jeremiah that he will ratify a new covenant with a nation other than Israel as predicted by Jacob and Moses referred to above. This new nation was the Ishmaelites with whom the new and the everlasting covenant was ratified at Mt. Paran (Makkah) through Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in about 668 AD. The Lord Himself took on Him to protect the covenant (Al-Qur'an) from corruption due to which the standard text is intact till today in its original language, words and contents.

4) The people will keep the covenant without the help of a teacher to remind them

We recollect that Israel had been a nation of the priests. They were told that if they obeyed the voice of the Lord and kept the covenant, they shall be unto the Lord a kingdom of priests. Consequently, the priests were the custodians of Law and the temple. They led the prayers, ministered the Law and guided the people to the religious rites and the traditions of the prophets. These hereditary priests were distinct from others, enjoyed special privileges and had special garments prescribed for them. People of Israel therefore obliged to consult the priests for the religious teachings and other matters concerning purification, cleanliness, offerings, sacrifices and services in and outside the temple. Following the pattern of Israel, the Christian too attached special importance to the church and the priesthood. They proclaimed that there could be no salvation outside the church. The pope was infallible and the final authority on the religion. His decisions and interpretations could overrule even the explicit meanings of the Old, as well as, the New Testament. The priesthood enjoyed vast powers on the salvations of man by obtaining confessions to forgive the sins of men. There was no way to have a direct approach to the Lord God unless and until it was through the church.

New covenant, i.e. the Qur'an, eliminated the hereditary class of the priests, and also granted freedom from the yolk of the church. There were no privileged classes enjoying holiness, nor any hereditary class of priests to teach the

people. Every person in the society had direct access to the Qur'an. One could memorize the entire Qur'an or get it copied from others. All the members of society therefore knew the Law without any involvement of the priesthood. This awareness of the Law also help a long way for the people to abide by its contents and the Muslims had always been the best society to observe the Law of the Lord.

5) The covenant will be written on the hearts of the people

The Lord therefore promised to make His Law accessible to all the people, high or low, because it was written on their hearts instead of preserving the same in the temple. Since the Qur'an could be copied or memorized freely by any of the believers, therefore most of the them obtained their own copies of the text and also took care to memorize the same for recitation of the same in their prayers five times a day. The companions of the prophet also took care to observe the same tenaciously. The prophecy therefore stood fulfilled entirely because all the companions and followers of the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) were fully aware of its contents and observed the same meticulously. We therefore find that the word of the Lord continues to be fulfilled till today, as tens of millions of people can reproduce the entire Qur'an from their memory because the Lord has written it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33).

The afore-stated clause that the Law will be written on the hearts of the people was something unique in the history of faith and persisting sign of the Lord. We know that the covenants of the prophets like Adam, Noah, Hud, Swaleh, and Abraham could not be preserved in writing for the benefit of their descendants. The covenant of Moses, however, contained Ten Commandments engraved on two stone tablets. Utmost efforts were made to write the Law on the pillars of stone and in the book to be preserved in the tabernacle. Many other techniques were adopted to preserve and to promulgate the Law or to teach the same to the Israelites. In spite of all these efforts, the books of the Law were destroyed wholly or partially at several occasions during the history of Israel. Moreover, the evil pen of the scribes also made concealments, interpolations, additions, and distortions in the word of God.

The translation of the covenant into the language other than the language of the revelation caused a loss to the real import and impact of the same. The transliteration of the Aramaic into Greek essentially restricted its contents to the understanding and interpretation of the foreigners who were not fully conversant with the background, the culture, the climate, and the history of the region. They also lacked the capability to interpret adequately the metaphors used by the Arab world of which Israel was a part. As such, even the best of the translation cannot replace the original text especially when the same is made by the foreigners. Much of the Israeli heritage must therefore have lost its original shade during its study through the colored glasses of the Greco-Roman translators/interpreters. In the absence of the original text therefore, we cannot assign any accuracy of the translation of the Old Testament. Similarly, the transformation of the life and teachings of Jesus into Greek by the writers a generation after the death/ascension of Christ writing the memoirs in a land far off from Palestine cannot give us an exact picture of the events. These were the factors among other responsible for the deviation of the Christian world from the original teachings of the Old Testament and also from the teachings of Jesus Christ. This was so because the followers of the prophets failed to preserve the original words and contents of the covenant and the teachings of the Christ.

6) The Lord will be their Lord and they will be His people

History bears witness to the fact that Israelites have always been boastful that they were the only people of the Lord. In their actual conduct however, they miserably failed to behave as the people of the Lord. As against them, the people of the final covenant, i.e. the Muslims, always refrained from the worship of the idols and did not worship anyone else than the Almighty. Masses usually obeyed the commandments of the Lord without ever complaining against Him. In Muslim society, the Law of the Lord was held supreme always remained supreme and other laws were made subservient to the same. As discussed earlier, **all the faithful followers of the true prophets, since Adam to Muhammad (صلى**

(الله عليه وسلم), **were all Muslims**, yet the Muslims under the new covenant were different in the sense that none of them had to teach the other to know the Lord. The concept of God's oneness, His eternity, and omnipotence was clear from the least to the greatest, and no scholars or experts in Greek philosophy or logic needed to explain the same. The absolute oneness of the Lord, as the Almighty and the creator of the universe had no ambiguity in it, and everyone could understand the attributes of the Lord without the help of the so-called teachers or the experts.

No doubt, Moses tried to establish the Kingdom of God, but gradually it became the kingdom of the priests who were the teachers, the guides, the judges, and the custodians of the law. All the people were bound to consult them in their day to day affairs and also to learn the Law and other rituals of worship from them. The book of Leviticus is nothing but the exposition of Law and of other traditions subjugating the Israelites to the priests. Only the priests could take hold of the book to recite the same in the temple or the synagogues. All the people of Israel therefore had to turn towards the hereditary class of priests for all religious requirements because they could neither make any sacrifice nor make other offerings unless and until the same were led by the priests. Ordinary believers had no excess to the book, nor any authority to explain the same. Christianity too followed the same pattern rigorously. They even enhanced the power and prestige of the priests to such an extent that they were believed to enjoy divine rights of forgiving the sins and perhaps accepting supplications of the laity. For more than 1500 years since Jesus Christ, the Bible mostly remained confined to the custody of the Church, the priest, or the monasteries. Ordinary people had hardly any chance to obtain a complete copy of the Bible. The priests usually read out to the people only certain selected and attractive parts of the Bible concealing major contents of the same from the laity. The church, represented by the popes, the priests, became the sole agent of the Lord to exercise authority over the believers. It was maintained that the authority of the Lord to forgive the sins vested in the church and there could be no salvation outside the church.

It was only the church that could forgive the sins after taking confession from the evil-doers. The authority of church stood delegated even to the juniors, and during the Crusades certain priests started even the allotment of different segments of Heaven to those who could pay for the same. It was the exclusive prerogative of the church to declare something lawful or otherwise. The pope could forgive the sin to those who bowed before him, while he could anathemise anyone who dared to differ from him. Instead of the Bible, the pope and his juniors were the final law-givers. Their interpretation could therefore change even the actual import of the Testament. We therefore find that during the inquisition, hundreds of thousands of people were declared heretic and punished severely by the Church. Most of such people were deprived of their entire property, suffered extreme torture, while thousands of them were burnt alive on stake. This is how the priestly class could tell the faithful from the heretic or the infidel. Only the decision of the clergy would determine ultimate fate of the Christians here on the earth, instead of leaving anything for the Lord to decide on the Day of Judgment. The church as such usurped all the prerogatives of the Lord who stood almost deposed or deprived of His absolute discretion to decide the fate of His creatures. Instead of enjoying any absolute power or authority over the mankind, god the father assumes the role of an old man and perhaps a silent spectator after relinquishing all his powers to the young man/Christ and his favorite followers who replaced the Lord, as well as, Christ to forgive the sins and decide their fate after death.

The new covenant was therefore unique in the sense that it abolished the monopoly of the priests both as a go between the Lord and man, and also negated their authority to forgive the sin or to judge the faith of the believers. The Qur'an negates any other god except the Almighty and also the existence of the intermediaries or the intercessors between God and man. Almighty Allah is the sole creator, sustainer, as well as, the only authority to accept supplications, to forgive the sins, and to decide the fate of men on the Day of Judgment. No one, except the Lord, can entertain any confessions from His creatures. It is the exclusive right of the sovereign Lord to remit the sin, to forgive the inequities, or to grant the humble supplications of His slaves. The covenant of the Lord, i.e. Qur'an, and the

words of the prophet were the final source to express the will of the Lord and the conduct of the prophet and his companions following him were the role-model of righteousness for all the people of the world for all times to come. The Lord God of the universe is the only rightful sovereign to judge the faith, as well as, the deeds of all the individuals; and it is He who can give rewards to the righteous or punish the transgressors in His absolute discretion for the same.

On one hand Islam has abolished the hereditary class of priests, and on the other it has eliminated the hierarchy system of priesthood with their prestigious garments and special prerogative in respect of the religious service to the Lord. They also enjoy no authority to forgive the sin or to entertain any confessions from others. It was the exclusive right of the sovereign Lord to accept the confession or to remit the sins of His people.

7) The Lord will forgive their inequities and remember their sins no more.

We discussed earlier that the Lord had always been merciful to forgive the sins of those who turn to Him, repent, and resolve to do good thereafter. The salvation therefore depends in the faith and worship of one and the only Lord God of all the prophets including Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), it also entails submission of one's will before the will of the Lord by following in the steps of the prophets. The evil-doers, who refuse to obey the commandments of the Lord or worship gods other than the Lord God of the universe cannot therefore be saved by any intercessor or a redeemer, unless and until they desist from their infidelity and obey the commandments of the Lord. This is the clear-cut verdict of the Lord, as quoted earlier. The prophecy therefore stresses the same, telling us that it will be the Lord alone who will forgive the sins of the people. No one can replace the Lord nor can anyone set us free from our dependence in Him. The priests, the church, or any intercessor has no authority to judge others or to stay between the God and man. They are not vested with any Divine rights to absolve human beings from accountability before the Lord. The priests and the laity stand on equal footing for judgment before the Lord. On

the other hand, we find that the Lord has graciously assured all the human beings that He will hear the supplications of the people directly and He also give His firm assurance to accept the same graciously. Those who deny the same snobbishly are sure to suffer the torment in the hell:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ
جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): but those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell - in humiliation!" (Al-Qur'an, 040.060 (Al-Ghafir)

Jeremiah too had conveyed the same message from the Lord:

"Call to me, and I will answer you; I will tell you wonderful and marvelous things that you know nothing about. (Jer 33:3 GNB)

All people, from the least to the great, enjoyed direct and equal access to the Lord. Anybody could recite the Qur'an and to learn the same by heart. Ordinarily, anyone among the Muslims who was righteous and knew the Qur'an better than others, was eligible to lead the prayers. All people, irrespective of their cast, color, nation, or region, could learn the Law and stand in equality with other scholars of the same. Basics were known to all the people and no one needed to consult any priest in the way it was necessary for the Israelites to consult them frequently even in the trifling matters. All believers had equal opportunity to put their supplications directly before the Lord with full confidence that they are heard and responded by the Lord compassionately. Jeremiah therefore stands as a true witness to inform the house of Israel about the advent of the holy prophet at Paran with the new covenant of the Lord. His prophecy therefore stands fulfilled in reality at Makkah without there being a shadow of doubt.

8) If the Israelites cast aside the ordinances of the Lord they will cease to be a nation.

The Lord clearly foretold Israel through Jeremiah that if they rejected the ordinances of the Lord, they will be punished to such an extent that they will cease to be a nation. Consequently, the prophecy stood fulfilled in the actual history of the world. Israel therefore ceased to be a nation for about 2000 years, i.e. from 70 AD to 1949 when the Western powers came to their help to plant them again in Palestine.

Although the Christians maintain that the prediction of the new covenant stood fulfilled in Jesus, yet the Muslims have cogent reasons to disagree with them. The oracles of Jeremiah clearly indicate that the same are continuation of Gen. 49:10, Deu 18:14-22 and 33:2-5 which pertain only to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as discussed earlier. It rather pinpoints the making of final and the everlasting covenant with the mankind through Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), which was formally ratified at Mount Paran, i.e. the mountains of the Makkah valley. To substantiate the contention of the Muslims, we may review the background and contents of certain predictions made by Jeremiah to arrive at a well balanced conclusion.

Going through the book, we find that Jeremiah told the people that:

Those who are the seekers of the truth must note the following essential points in the verses given above:

ii) The Lord will make a new covenant which will not be like the old one.

The main theme of the Jeremiah's prediction was to foretell a new covenant which will not be like the old one.

The new covenant differed from the old one especially in two respects. One, that the Israelites generally failed to live by the covenant partly due to their own rebellious attitude and also because they did not enjoy an unfettered direct access to the same. The Law of the Lord was kept confined in the Tabernacle and it was usually preserved under the lock and key of the priests. It was neither easily accessible to the people nor it could become the code of conduct of everyone in the society.

During our discussion on the covenant so far, we tried to demonstrate that the final and the everlasting covenant was ratified through the promised prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) at Paran, i.e. Makkah valley, in about This was the actual fulfillment of the predictions made by Jacob (Gen. 49:10) and by Moses (Deu. 18:9-21, 33:2). The interpretation as above is not acceptable either to the Israelites or to the Christians. The former claim themselves to be the sons of God and the only people of the Lord. They pretend to be the only descendants of Abraham, and believe that there can be no salvation outside Israel. Although the said claim is against the history of faith, as well as, the facts of the genealogies even recorded in the Genesis, still they insist that there can be no prophets or blessings to people other than Israel. They forget that they rebelled against the Lord again and again to pursue their self interest. Their ethnicity forced them to conceal the revelations not acceptable to them. In other cases, they felt free to change the word of God and also to interpolate the words which were favorable to the cause of Israel. All efforts have been made to obliterate the name of Ishmaelites from the prophecy which actually suggested the advent of the promised prophet and ratification of the final and everlasting covenant at Paran, i.e. Makkah. There are several passages in the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Haggai where one finds that the words Israel, Zion, and Jerusalem have been inserted to confuse the text which seems to imply Ishmaelites, Arabs and Makkah. Although the afore-stated interpolations or replacements had no impact on the actual history of the region, yet they served to appease the ego of the Israelites by adding ambiguity in the text. Actual events of history however falsify the spurious claims of Israel and they fail to frustrate the work of the Lord. The Lord did fulfill His promise of the final blessings at Makkah against the wishes of Israel, as well as, the Christians which is manifest to the entire people in the world. God says:

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ

Fain would they extinguish Allah's light with their mouths, but Allah will not allow but that His light should be perfected, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse.

Al-Qur'an, 009.032-033 (At-Tawba [Repentance, Dispensation])

Other references on the subject we find in Al Qur'an 8:8, 10:82 and 61:8.

As no true faith can be maintained without preservation of the original words of the covenant, therefore the Almighty took it on Himself to preserve the book of His final covenant in its original words, form, and contents. It was therefore declared that:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَافِظُونَ

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption). (Al-Qur'an, 015.009 (Al-Hijr))

The Lord also made it easy for the people to memorize the Qur'an:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

And We have indeed **made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember**: then is there any that will receive admonition? (Al-Qur'an, 054.017 (Al-Qamar))

The preservation of the Qur'an was therefore the work of the Lord who made it easy for the people to remember the same. Millions of believers therefore have always memorized the entire Qur'an and even after lapse of more than 1400 years since its revelation at Makkah, we find millions of Muslims today who can recite or reproduce the entire Qur'an with utmost accuracy in the sight of all the people of the world. This is so because the Lord has made it mandatory for Muslims to recite some part of the Qur'an during their regular prayers five times a day. Similarly, the entire Qur'an is recited at least once a year during Traweeh prayers of Ramadan in almost each and every mosque in the world. No wonder that the Qur'an remains preserved hundred percent accurately till today. The word of the Lord, in Jer. 31:33 therefore stands fulfilled. It is unique therefore that out of all the revelations of the Lord it is only

the Qur'an that remains absolutely intact till today. The immutability of Qur'an therefore is the everlasting sign of the Qur'an before all the people of the world. Those who deny the fact, stated above, may prepare themselves for accountability before the Lord when He will require it of them on the Day of Judgment (Deu. 18:19).

Since the specific distinction of the new covenant from the old one was in the fact that the parts or the whole of new covenant will be written on the hearts of the believers, therefore the Lord fulfilled His promise of making it easy to remember it accurately and to understand the same adequately.

Vision of Prophet Habakkuk

Towards the end of 7th century BC, i.e. about more than 500 years after Moses, Prophet Habakkuk felt extremely perturbed due to injustices and lawlessness prevailing all around him. In his agony he asks the Lord gloom+ily as to how long the evil-doers will go unpunished. His laments are evident from Hab. 1:2-4 and 1:12-17. Ultimately the Lord announced the doom on the unrighteous. Meanwhile Habakkuk made certain entreaties to the Lord such as given below:

O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! (Hab. 1:2 KJV)

He further prays:

O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, **revive thy work in the midst of the years**, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. (Hab. 3:2 KJV)

It appears that the prophet prayed to the Lord that He may revive his works pertaining to his covenant, such as done during the times of Moses. The obvious concern of Habakkuk was observation of the Law of Moses in the society, which also contained punishments to the transgressors of Law and equity. The verses that follow were perhaps the most appropriate response from the Lord to all such supplications of Habakkuk and shed light on the past as well as future of the covenant.

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the **earth**

was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. (Hab. 3:3-4 KJV)

We observe that in the Biblical genealogy Teman was a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11, 15, 42 and 1Cho. 1:36 and 53). Subsequently, Teman was one of the most important Edomite tribes. In due course Teman was used as a synonym for Edom itself (The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. xii). Teman also was an important town in the southern part of Edom. Similarly, Seir too being the most important mountain range in Edom was used as a synonym for Edom. It is therefore evident from the above that both Teman and Seir were used as alternates and perhaps equivalents to Edom.

The words Teman (Hab. 3:3) and Tema, being the name of a town towards south of Edom, mean on the right which suggests the south. Thus, the prediction that God came from Teman may also mean that the covenant was being ratified in the south, i.e. Paran (Makkah valley) and was likely to be enforced from there in all areas including Canaan and other places in the north. We also know that Tema or Thema was a son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:15) and there is a town named Tema or Taiema in north west Arabia about 30 miles south of Daumat-ul-Jandal, i.e. Dumah (Hastings Dictionary). May be this also suggests that the prophet of the covenant will be from the descendants of Ishmael in the south of Edom and Canaan. The final blessing of Moses had already predicted the same more than 500 years before Habakkuk.

And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. (Deu 33:2 KJV)

Keeping in view the above, we find that the vision of Habakkuk (Hab. 3:3) was an echo of the blessings of Moses quoted above. Here Teman stands for Seir, while **Paran is constant in both the predictions.** There is no doubt that from Paran the Bible means the land which was inhabited by Hagar, Ishmael, and their descendants. As such, it could be no other place except Makkah and the lands surrounding the same in Arabia, which have been the

actual areas inhabited by the Ishmaelites. Habakkuk therefore reaffirms that the covenant of the Lord is likely to be ratified afresh at Paran, i.e. Makkah. Earlier the venue of the Lord's presence (for ratification of the covenant) had been firstly the Mount Sinai and subsequently Mount Seir with a prediction for Paran (Deu. 33:2). Here in Habakkuk, it is clearly envisioned that the venue of the covenant shifts from Seir or Edom to Paran. Thus, coming of the holy one from Paran became the greatest event of history which has not only revived the work and the testament of the Lord at Sinai, Edom, and Moab; but it also covered substantial parts of the world in all directions around Makkah and Arabia. The new covenant at Paran therefore became the code of conduct, not only for the people of Arabia and Middle East but it extended to far off areas of Europe, Asia, Africa, and other continents within a short span of time. Actual history therefore confirms that the glory of the Lord covered the Heavens, while the earth was full of the praise for Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), as predicted by Habakkuk (Hab. 3:3b). Incidentally, it is interesting to note that even the name of the holy one was Muhammad (praise-worthy, highly praised, etc.) and Ahmad (most laudable) which both stem from the root حمد (Hamd) which means praise. The vision of Habakkuk therefore pinpoints the Holy Prophet by almost mentioning him by name. In addition to the above, the verses quoted below also correspond to the works and achievements of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in the actual history of the world.

And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and **drove asunder the nations;** and **the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.** I saw **the tents of Cushan in affliction:** and **the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.** (Hab. 3:4-7 KJV)

It was only prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who brought such enlightenment to the world that it dispelled all ignorance and darkness by infusing knowledge and wisdom in the people. Teachings of the prophet had such a wide spread impact in the world that Muslim learning and

research became the stepping stone for renaissance in the West to redeem Europe from the Dark Ages.

Horns, coming out of the hands of the holy one, represent the power which became evident before all the people of the world. Before him the greatest nations of the world, such as the Romans, the Egyptians, the Persians and others, lost their glory. Everlasting mountains therefore refer to the long outstanding powers of Rome and Iran, which stood scattered and their prestige like hills did bow before the forces of the holy one. Similarly, the tents of Cushan, i.e. northern Sudan, Ethiopia, and other adjoining lands came under the sway of the followers of the holy prophet actually as foreseen by Habakkuk. Lands of Midian too came under the rule and control of the people of the new covenant forever. Thus, the prophecy of Habakkuk was fulfilled in letter and spīÿt before the eÿÿ of all the people in the world. Similarly, the clause that 'His ways are everlasting' signifies that the covenant in the Qur'an will have an everlasting impact and it will remain intact and operative for all times to come. This is the actual and the most outstanding sign of the Lord as bright as sun, persisting in the world as a beacon of light for all those who are the seekers of truth and for those who crave for the straight path towards the Lord.

Worship of New Gods

Our study of faith as established repeatedly that the prophets of the Lord have always been preaching the worship of one and the only God of the universe as the sole creator, evolver, and the sustainer of the universe. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) were humble servants, as well as, messengers of the Lord, deputed to guide the mankind towards the Lord. All the prophets stressed recurrently that there were no other gods besides the Lord. **Israelites too were warned repeatedly not to worship the new gods or the gods worshiped by other nations around them.** They were strictly forbidden to worship any gods who were not worshiped by their ancestors, i.e. by true prophets of Israel. The Lord

therefore told Jeremiah that He was angry with Israel due to their infidelity. He said:

because their people had done evil and had made me angry. They offered sacrifices to other gods and **served gods that neither they nor you nor your ancestors ever worshiped.** (Jer. 44:3 GNB)

We therefore conclude that the Israelites or the Christians have no justification to worship the gods, which their forefathers did not worship at all. As regards Jesus, he himself lived as a humble servant of the Lord and did not claim divinity at any time during his life. He did not teach anyone to worship him as a god. Similarly, the Holy Ghost too was taken as a god, instead of being the Holy Spirit (روح القدس), i.e. Jibrael-Amin, serving as a servant and exalted messenger of the Lord. The Lord God never introduced the Holy Spirit or Jesus as His partners in the divinity, nor they could themselves think of claiming any equality or partnership with the Lord.

We shall discuss the points stated above in some detail in the following:

In view of the above, no importance was attached to collection and recording the actual events of life or sayings of Jesus from the place of origin, in spite of the fact that there existed many eyewitnesses of the same at Jerusalem till about 35 years after the death/accession of Jesus. Memoirs in Hebrew or Aramaic if any were totally ignored. This was so because human life and activities of Jesus were of no use to the Hellenistic society. Romans were a polytheist society worshiping many gods who also had deified many of their emperors after their death. As such, the simple story pertaining to the life and efforts of a man and prophet from Palestine, a tiny colony state groaning under the over lordship of the Romans was not likely to draw any attention of the masses in the Hellenistic society. It required something dazzling, superb and glorious to impress the people and to allure them to the new religion. The propounders of Christianity therefore took no interest to collect or record details about the life and teachings of Jesus in Galilee and Judea up to his death. Main focus of their attention was the Christ resurrected and glorified as a savior of mankind for which they needed only the

revelations made by Jesus during his post resurrection appearances in the visions.

There is a no disagreement on the fact that the epistles of St. Paul and the Gospels in the name of St. Luke and John were written in Greek. As regards Matthew and Mark, there are certain suggestions here and there that they had their origin in Hebrew or the Aramaic. Scholars, however, do not find any reliable evidence for the same. It is broadly agreed that Mark and Matthew too were written in Greek, and the Hebrew version thereof was simply a translation from the Greek. There is no doubt, however, that all the afore-stated Gospels were written in the lands situated far away from Palestine and by the writers who were somehow under the influence of St. Paul. Actual compilers of the Bibles in the names of St. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John seem to be unaware of the culture, the environments, social setup and the traditional background of the Jewish society in which Jesus had to start and end his mission in Palestine. It differed in all respects from the history, the background, the social surroundings and faith of those living in the Hellenistic society. Keeping in view, the needs and the priorities of the Hellenized world, therefore the Evangelists did not find it worthwhile to present the person and the teachings of Jesus in their true form. To present a luminous and glorified figure of Jesus in the Roman world, it was convenient for the writers to take it for granted that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the oracles in the Old Testament. The aforesaid writers therefore explored the scriptures thoroughly to find out any oracles that could be interpreted to develop the image of Jesus Christ as the promised savior of Israel, who also was the savior of the mankind. Annunciation of Jesus was therefore presented as the most prominent event of history and was aptly pronounced as a Good News (Gospel) for the people of the world. Similarly, the death of Jesus had been shown as a vicarious sacrifice to save the mankind and the event was depicted as the climax of the entire history of man. St. Matthew often selected certain verses of the Old Testament and proclaimed that those were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This was done to make the scripture true on one hand, and to sanctify the events narrated by Matthew on the other. It was therefore the requirement of the theme that actual

events may be ignored or obscured to replace the same by supernatural acts to prove that Jesus was the real son of God and savior of the humanity.

To promote the sale of Christianity in the Roman world, St. Paul did not desist even from telling lies to the masses and also professed freedom from the Law of the Lord. All prohibitions enjoined in the Law of Moses were replaced by licentiousness. Christianity as such provided the people with maximum permissiveness as compared to Judaism and other religions around the Mediterranean Sea. Long established Law, as well as, certified teachings of the prophets including Jesus himself; were set aside and replaced by a new doctrine of licentiousness and salvation made easy, which conformed to the ethos of the Hellenistic society and also served the self interest of the people longing for salvation and life eternal.

We stated earlier that the proponents of the new faith developed the lofty structure of Christology on the bed rock of the oracles assigned to the Isaiah and other prophets in accordance with presupposed or assumed character of divinity in him. They accomplished it by interpreting the oracles in the Old Testament to depict Jesus as the focal point of the divine purpose of salvation for man. Jesus Christ as such was projected as the only son of God who was co-eternal and co-equal with other two partners in the Trinity formed by God the Father, god the Son, and god the Holy Ghost. The exponents of the new faith tried to interpret the entire history of faith and contents of the Old Testament as a prelude to the advent of Jesus the only savior and the god incarnate on earth. New belief therefore deviated sharply from the true teachings of Isaiah, the prophets, and even Jesus himself who never thought of himself as anything more than a prophet of the Lord towards Israel.

The New Testament consisting of the writings of St. Paul and the Evangelists under the influence of St. Paul created an unbridgeable chasm between it and between the overall perspective of the Old Testament. No doubt Jesus has been taking advantage of the epithet of father for god which was commonly used by the Jews, yet he never claimed any genetic succession from God nor he tried to establish any blood relation with Him. Whenever he talked about the Lord he referred to Him as 'my Father and your Father', which

was simply an allegory to the love and care of the Lord. Very often Jesus referred to his own self as son of man without ever giving the impression that he himself was a god or the only son of God as advocated by the so-called Christians in the Hellenized world. It may be of some interest here to note that the Hebrew of human being is son of man, i.e. 'Bani Adam' the title which was usually adopted by Jesus about his own self. The frequent use of the term 'son of man' was perhaps to emphasize his humanity and the humanity of all other prophets before or after him. It is not unlikely that Jesus might have used the term 'son of man' about him to dispel any misbelief that he was the son of God or about the one who was to come. Throughout his life, we do not find Jesus telling anyone to worship him instead of the Lord. It never passed his mind that the people who were refusing to receive him as a man and prophet during his life in Palestine would start worshipping him as god in the Roman world soon after his death. We shall therefore discuss the same in detail elsewhere in the book, but for the present we shall focus our attention only on the main theme of Isaiah as it transpires from the book assigned to him.

Such oracles in Isaiah, Psalms and other books of the Old Testament were utilized by the Evangelists to develop the portrait of Jesus as we find in the New Testament. Since these very oracles were the basis of the Christology developed by St. Paul and the Evangelists on the authority of Isaiah, David and others; therefore any doubt about the identity of their writers knocks bottom out of the Christology based on such oracles. It's reliability is also reduced due to bypassing or surpassing true Jesus of history who was sent only to retrieve the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Jesus the man and prophet was therefore pushed into obscurity only to efface human life and activities of the said prophet, so that he may be presented in the elevated form as resurrected Jesus Christ and the only savior of the mankind. Real Jesus who proclaimed the imminence of the Kingdom of God, the one who exhorted the people to repent because the Kingdom of God was accessible only to those who repent, was gradually obliterated from the writings of St. Paul and also from the life account prepared by the composers of the Gospels. The

said writers also enjoyed the liberty to present Jesus in their own way due to the fact they were writing their epistles and the gospels in Greek while living in the lands situated far away from Palestine. There was no one to challenge the veracity of such writings nor did anyone feel the necessity to recheck the details of faith from Nazareth or Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places in the Asian lands failed to stop Paul from preaching his faith clearly contradicting the faith of Jesus and all prophets before him. Initial opposition of the genuine apostles and followers of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem did not bring any positive impact on Paul. Dissention between St. Paul and genuine apostles like Barnabas, Peter, and James resulted in the triumph of the doctrine of Paul especially after 70 CE, when the original church at Jerusalem stood destroyed and dispersed forever. Teachings of Paul and his followers in Greek were upheld by the state, while others were persecuted severely as heretics. All this resulted in obscuring the true teachings of Jesus and replacing the same with the doctrine of Paul and others.

It is an admitted fact that St. Paul had no chance to see or hear Jesus during his life. He converted to Christianity about 10 years after death/ascension of Christ. All the four writers of the Gospels were still later entrants in the fold of Christianity. These neo-Christians differed widely from the faith and practice of the earliest and the original apostles/followers of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem who did not differentiate themselves from the main body of the Jewish community. Factually, the small sect of believers in Jesus at Jerusalem continued to be assiduous worshipers at the Temple joining the masses in the congregation up to the time the Temple was leveled to the ground and the Jews wiped out of Judea and Jerusalem. The last verse ending the Gospel of Luke bears witness to the same:

And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. (Luk 24:53 KJV)

There is another evidence in the Acts where it is said that:

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat

their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Act 2:43-47 KJV)

This shows that not only the disciples were attending the Temple regularly with other Jews, but they also did not preach anything against commonly shared faith of the Jews. The only point differentiating them from the community was their belief that Jesus was Christ.

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. (Act 5:42 KJV)

In addition to above, it has also been recorded that the believers in Christ flourished among the Jews rapidly at Jerusalem:

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Act 6:7 KJV)

It transpires from the above that during the first generation after Jesus, his followers at Jerusalem took him only as a prophet and messiah of Israel and continued to observe the Jewish Law as usual in its entirety. It shows that the earliest followers of Jesus were extremely zealous for the law and they never even thought of worshiping Jesus as a deity. The believers in Christ in the holy city, however, awaited eagerly for his return. They knew full well that Jesus had lived as a Jew and died as a prophet of Israel without having any idea of introducing a new religion. The nucleus consisting of the genuine disciples and the initial followers of Jesus therefore stuck to the Law of Moses and continued to attend congregations in the Temple punctiliously up to 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the city, leveled the Temple, and subjected to a terrible massacre of most of the Jews there. Survivors among the Jews dispersed throughout the world never returning home up to the beginning of the twentieth century AD. Thus, the vacuum created by the obliteration of the center preaching the true faith of Moses and the prophets was therefore filled by the Paulian doctrine supported by official patronization of the state throughout Europe and other parts of the Roman Empire.

As discussed earlier, St. Paul and Evangelists like St. Luke, never had any contact or acquaintance with Jesus during his life. As for Mark and Matthew, it is doubtful that they were the actual authors of the Gospels assigned to their names. The statement that the former perhaps the one who ran away naked leaving his shroud of linen behind () a simply a gesture and not a fact. Mark's relation to Barnabas, if any, cannot be quoted as a proof of his personal companionship or contact with Jesus. As for Matthew, there is nothing to prove that he was the same person who was a tax collector and an apostle of Jesus. Except for the letters assigned to James and Peter, there is no other evidence that any of the genuine apostles left original record of his memoirs pertaining to the life and teachings of Jesus witnessed by them during the life of Jesus on earth. No apostles of Jesus recorded the teachings of Jesus in the language spoken by him. As for oral evidence, it too was lost forever due to the fact that the nucleus of the believers in Christ at Jerusalem stood shattered or destroyed during the onslaught of the Romans in year 70 AD. This was the time when the Evangelists in the lands far away from Palestine had a freehand to compose the Gospels to suite their own theme. These Gospels were written in Greek instead of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus and the genuine apostles in Palestine. It is said that the earliest Gospel, i.e. Mark's, was written between 65 and 70 CE, i.e. about 40 years after the death/ascension of Jesus, while the last one was compiled around or after 110 CE. St. Mark, Matthew, Luke and John have been shown as composers of the Gospels assigned to them. Factually, none of the writers of the afore-stated Gospels can be identified with any certainty at all. We also do not find any reference to the fact that the Gospels were based on some written documents from those who had first hand information about the life and events pertaining to Jesus. No writer has mentioned his source of information nor he has quoted from anyone who had heard or seen Jesus preaching in the Temple or elsewhere in Palestine. It appears therefore that the Evangelists instead of recording the facts found it convenient to compile their books from hearsay or through interpreting the oracles in the psalms, Isaiah and other prophets in a special way and by depicting Jesus as fulfillment of the same. Such oracles were utilized firstly to establish the prominence regarding the advent of

Christ and secondly to magnify Jesus the Christ far beyond the real life and teachings of the said prophet. As regards the oracles from Isaiah, we said earlier that Cha. 40-66 cannot be assigned to him. It is obvious therefore that the glorification leading to divination of Jesus are not based on any trustworthy source material and cannot be taken as a truth.

Although the Christian scholars have tried tooth and nail to prove that St. Mark, St. Luke, and others were either the direct witnesses of the events or they composed the same on the basis of direct information collected from Jerusalem, yet there is no reliable evidence to prove their contention. Factually, we cannot identify the actual writers of the Gospels assigned to the name of Mark, Mathew, Luke, and John. Without going into details for the present, we proceed to observe that the neo-Christians had a freehand to preach a new faith in the name of Jesus Christ throughout the Greco-Roman world. The religion introduced by them was therefore far from the true religion of Jesus the prophet of Israel. Instead of depicting Jesus as a humble servant of the Lord who lived and died as a follower of the Law of Moses, the Christians evolved another Jesus, i.e. the crucified Christ and presented him as the only savior of mankind. It was professed that by his vicarious sacrifice on the stake, Jesus had taken on him all the sins of mankind, while through his resurrection three days after his death. Believers in Christ were supposed to live in him. Hence they live in Christ forever.

Later on, in about year 325 Ad, the Nicaea consul headed by Constantine, the pagan emperor of Rome, officially approved the doctrine of Trinity formed by God the Father, god the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The official creed of the Roman Empire thereafter was not a belief in the unity of God but a belief in Trinity as stated above. It was maintained that all the three partners in the Trinity were co-equal and co-eternal in all respects. There were three independent persons in the godhead, while each one could be distinguished from the other due to certain qualities specified for him. Contradicting the same, it was also claimed that the sum total of three persons when reassembled into one remained unchanged. Similarly, it was said that when the unity was split into three, it did not

reduce any of the parts to size lesser than the whole unit, i.e. Trinity. It was also implied that three independent persons when merged into one unity did not make it three but only one god. Conversely, three independent persons were also not three but one God. Many futile efforts have been made by the most eminent scholars throughout the history of Christianity, but no one could ever succeed to prove the dogma. The jugglery of words therefore leads us no where, and one fails to find the necessity of splitting the one and the only Lord God of the universe into three distinguishable and independent persons if factually there was one God as believed by Jesus and all other prophets before him.

In view of the discussion made above, we find that the doctrine of Trinity approved by the council of Nicaea about 325 year after the death of Jesus is clearly against the facts and the true teachings of Jesus Christ. It also violates reason, as well as, the basics pertaining to addition and subtraction of the numerals. It is maintained that God the father begets and is not begotten. Son (Jesus) is begotten and not a father. The Holy Ghost is the issue of the other two persons. It is also said that Jesus was begotten by the power of the Holy Ghost. If so, one fails to understand how all the three independent persons in the Trinity can be co-equal and co-eternal, as postulated by the Christians. The enigma as such is insoluble for the last 2000 years of the history of Christianity, and the people of any sagacity and reason no longer believe in the same.

The ideas such as incarnation, savior god, Trinity, and eternal life in Christ were novelties for the people of the Book in Palestine and in southeastern parts of the Roman Empire. The new formulation, however, was extremely attractive and palatable to the Greco-Roman polytheists and the pagan nations surrounding the Mediterranean who were already familiar to similar beliefs; hence they did not hesitate to accept the same.

They were already worshipping numerous deities, indigenous as well as imported from other areas surrounding Rome. Aside from a pantheon of non-human gods, they also had deified their emperors like Gaius Julius, Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian, and Titus etc. after their death. In the afore-stated particular background of tradition and faith, the people would find no estrangement with the Trinity or

elevation of Jesus as godhead. As against this, it was foreign to them to believe in absolute oneness of the Lord God in accordance with the basic teaching of all the prophets of Israel. The milieu of the Hellenistic society therefore was not fertile enough to entertain any Hero or an ideal in the shape of a prophet from Palestine, a tiny and subdued state groaning under the over lordship of the Romans, who haughtily claimed themselves to be the rulers of the world. It was perhaps due to the considerations as above that St. Paul was compelled to introduce Jesus as God Almighty and a savior lord; instead of a man, a prophet and humble subject of the Roman Empire. Only a god and a glorified savior with divine attributes could be acceptable to the Hellenist society. St. Paul therefore discarded all the historic role of Jesus as a man and prophet in Palestine and took the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus as the starting point of his new religion. He therefore preached the crucified Christ resurrected three days after his death as the only savior of mankind. Aside from being the only son of God, Jesus also had the additional quality of the only savior of mankind, which gave him an edge over all other gods worshiped by the pagans in the Middle East.

The new religion had many added attractions, as compared to Judaism and other religions in and around the Mediterranean. It was appealing because it neither clashed with the long outstanding traditions of the Hellenistic society nor it contained any strict prohibitions enjoined in the Law of Moses imposing severe punishments on the transgressors. Christianity, as introduced by St. Paul, presented an easy formula of salvation which was free from all the obligations under the Law of Moses. The salvation, as well as, eternal life was assured with the package containing maximum permissiveness for the believers. Christianity as such had a special allurements for the people because it met with the wishes of the masses. Good deeds were no longer necessary to win the favor of the Lord. Salvation depended not on the righteousness but merely in the faith that Jesus Christ was the only son of God who had given his life to take away the sins of the believers. Resurrection of Jesus gradually received wide acceptance throughout the Roman Empire and it stood accepted as an

ultimate truth, in spite of the fact that it had no reliable historical evidence to prove the same. The said resurrection was further interpreted as a defeat to death. Believers in Christ were supposed to have associated with him which assured them eternity of life in Christ. The concept of victory over sin and death was welcome to the Hellenistic society yearning for the life eternal, and they took a relief in accepting the new religion of salvation and eternity.

St. Paul and his followers professed that sin was the cause of death. It was argued that sin of Adam in the Garden brought death as its wages on the mankind. According to the doctrine all the human beings inherited sin from Adam, and they all became leprous and debilitated to do anything good or to get rid of the vice of sin and death through their own efforts. It was argued that expiation of the sin was impossible without the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb, while Jesus being the only son and the unblemished lamb of God gave his life on stake as vicarious sacrifice to take away the sin of man. His resurrection three days after his death was inferred as a defeat to death, while his taking away the sin of men was assumed as permanent victory over sin. Believers in Christ therefore stood released from sin and death by attaining eternal life in Christ.

Consciously or unconsciously St. Paul did a good service to the Romans. The new ideology had a mitigating effect on the rigidity of the Jews living throughout the Roman Empire. For centuries together, they had been trying to gain independence from the Greeks and the Romans. Their repeated insurrections against the foreign rule aimed at independence for the Jews, so that they could restore the Law of Moses and live in accordance with the customs of Israel. The Greeks and the Romans, on the other hand, have always been trying to assimilate them in the Hellenistic culture by obliterating the Jewish cult and replacing the same with the Hellenistic language and the traditions. With the introduction of the new formula of salvation the Law of Moses was no longer a necessity for Israel. The preaching of the savior assured the believers a complete freedom from the Law of the Lord commonly known as the Law of Moses. As against this, St. Paul exhorted the people to obey the Law of the Romans on the ground that the Roman Emperors were enjoying the said authority on the basis of the Divine will and approval for

the same. It was not therefore necessary for the Jews to rebel against the Romans for independence to live their lives in accordance with the Law of Moses and the traditions of Israel. They could be saved merely through faith in the Christ without following the Law of Moses. Since the new belief was useful and with the Hellenistic cause, therefore the Romans soon realized its advantage and started patronizing it throughout the empire. Eventually, it was declared as the state religion of the Roman Empire and the none believers were persecuted, liquidated, or expelled from the lands in the ruled by the Romans.

With active support of the state, the Christianity flourished rapidly throughout the Roman Empire. Initially the Greek speaking Christian converts in the northwest of the Mediterranean followed the teachings of St. Paul and the Evangelists. They all became Trinitarians and started worshipping Christ as the only savior and the son of God. A substantial number of converts in the southeastern parts of Roman Empire, however, did not believe in Trinity. They somehow continued their affiliation with the Law of Moses, and did not take Jesus more than a prophet. Subsequently, after the advent of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) such Christians in the Middle East readily accepted Islam. The Christians in Europe or in the north western parts of the Roman Empire, however, followed the teachings of St. Paul, St. John, Athanasius, and others. They also adopted the edicts of Roman Emperors like Constantine and the decisions of the counsels of Nicaea 325 AD also became a part of their creed. Other Jews surviving in the countries of the Middle East, however, remained staunch opponents of Christianity, as well as, of Islam. A very small number of such Jews accepted Islam wholeheartedly, while others went into Diaspora or continued to maintain their faith while living in the Muslim regions or in various countries of Europe and Middle East.

Before moving further, we quote a few verses in continuation of the verses discussed above where the Lord tells us as under:

(130) And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose and rendered pure in this world: And he will be in the Hereafter in

the ranks of the Righteous. (131) Behold! his Lord said to him: "Bow (thy will to Me):" He said: "I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe." (132) And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; "Oh my sons! Allah hath chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the Faith of Islam." (Al-Qur'an, 002.130-132 (Al-Baqara)

Almighty Allah continues to reveal further that

(133) Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob? Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship Thy god and the god of thy fathers, of Abraham, Isma'il and Isaac,- the one (True) Allah: To Him we bow (in Islam)." (134) That was a people that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case! (135) They say: "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (To salvation)." Say thou: "Nay! (I would rather) the Religion of Abraham the True, and he joined not gods with Allah." (136) Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah (in Islam)." (Al-Qur'an, 002.133-136 (Al-Baqara)

God in fact was the God of all the people in the world. He tried and tested many nations in the world one after the other. Israelites too were tried and tested in their own turn. They had an undulating character of right or wrong during long span of about 14 years in between Moses and Jesus. The rebellion against Lord was always increasing till towards the end when they assassinated John the Baptist and attempted to crucify Jesus. They therefore was the last prophets in Israel who neither left any descendants nor any other prophet was raised from Israel. No one among Israel cared the original words of Injeel (i.e. the book of Jesus). The Israelites denied Jesus during his life and continued to persecute his followers till they themselves were defeated, destroyed, and thrown out of the holy land by the Romans. They remained under the curse of the Lord and even the temple was raised to ground and the city set on fire. Romans thereafter became master of the region and gradually master of the religion which had taken its start from Moses and developed for about 1500 years by other prophets of Israel including Jesus himself. Thus, instead of pure religion of the prophets and Jesus, the new religion of

Paul had its sway in the Middle East. Christianity as such, retained some of the Jewish heritage, adopted a lot of paganism, and developed a new religion by making a servient to Greco-Roman of the old. Prof. Toynbee had described the situation in the following words:

....

When Abraham completed the walls of Kaaba along with Ishmael, he made the following prayers:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ
 بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمْتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ
 الْمَصِيرُ . وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
 السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ . رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا
 مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ . رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ
 يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

And remember Abraham said: "My Lord, make this a **City of Peace**, and **feed its people with fruits, -such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day.**" He said: "(Yea), and such as reject Faith,-for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire,- an evil destination (indeed)!" And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): "**Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us:** For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. "Our Lord! **make of us Muslims**, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will); and show us our place for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. "**Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them:** For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise." Al-Qur'an, 002.126-129 (Al-Baqara [The Cow])

It is on record that God graciously responded to all the prayers of Abraham as recorded above. The entire world is witness to the fulfillment of the said prayers. Of utmost importance among the prayers was the request for sending a prophet from among the Ishmaelites at Makkah, for the purposes detailed in verse 129 of Sura 2 reproduced above. We have cogent reasons to believe that Isaac and Jacob knew full well about Kaaba and Abraham's devotion to the first house of the Lord there. Throughout their life they did not know any other house of the Lord except Kaaba. Even Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt did not construct any other temple for them. It is therefore presumed that they always faced towards Kaaba during their prayers. This is also confirmed from the fact that during Exodus, Moses

always offered the sacrifices in the Tabernacle facing towards south i.e. towards Kaaba. Even subsequently, after construction of the temple Jerusalem, the Israelites continued to face Kaaba while offering their sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem, anyhow, to show the primacy of their own Temple at Jerusalem, the Israeli scribes have tried to conceal the fact from the common people, so that they may not know that they were facing Kaaba. All this shows that Isaac and Jacob were fully aware of the afore-stated prayer of Abraham about Makkah and also His last prophet who would appear there bearing the final covenant of God with the mankind in the shape of Qur'an, which is still available to entire population of the world. God continues the revelation, the meaning of which are as under:

Behold! his Lord said to him: "Bow (thy will to Me):" He said: "I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe." And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; "Oh my sons! Allah hath chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the Faith of Islam." Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob? Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship Thy god and the god of thy fathers, of Abraham, Isma'il and Isaac,- the one (True) Allah: To Him we bow (in Islam)." Al-Qur'an, 002.131-133 (Al-Baqara [The Cow])

Divine Guidance and the Prophecy

We know that the prophets received guidance from the Lord regarding the faith and the righteous conduct advised to mankind. In addition to the same, the Lord also foretold the prophets certain important events, which were sure to happen in this world. Such information are called the prophecies, from which the English word the prophet.

The other prayer of Abraham was even more important than the first one, which was:

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Our Lord! and **raise up in them a Messenger from among them** who shall recite to them Thy communications and

teach them the Book and the wisdom, **and purify them**; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. (2: 129)

The prayer of Abraham at Kaaba has as above has something extremely important in them, as we detail hereunder:

1. Abraham prayed to the Lord that He may raise up in them a Rasul (Messenger) from among them. This shows that the Messenger was prayed especially from the Ishmaelites and not the Israelites.
2. Such a prophet should recite the verses (آيات) of the Lord and teach them the book.
3. The prophet may teach them the wisdom and may purify them.

We note that all the prophets in Israel were the Israelites, and this prophet prayed by Abraham was to be from the Ishmaelites in Arabia. Secondly, the prayer had a special feature of teaching wisdom to his people and purifying them. The history tells us that the Muslims, the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), were wise enough not to repeat the arrogance, the rebellion, and the treachery of the Israelites. They were purified to the extent that they wholeheartedly submitted to the will of the Lord, and tried to establish the Kingdom of God on earth as it was in the Heaven. The Muslims, by the grace of Allah, never associated any partners with the Lord, nor they ever worshiped the idols. Even after a lapse of 1400 years since the death of the prophet, there has been no change in the Qur'an, and the same is available in the same words, form, and contents as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Thus, the prayer of Prophet Abraham was fully responded by the Lord by its complete fulfillment before all the people of the world.

We therefore note that ever since the arrogance of Satan the pride and superiority complex of different persons or nations led them to rebel against the commandments of the Lord, which resulted into vast corruption, disruption, and destruction on Earth in the past and may result into eventual annihilation of mankind on earth. As against this, the humble submission to the will of the Lord and abiding by the guidance from the Lord has always been the only safe path for ultimate welfare of man. This is the only

course for the promotion of peace, justice, love, and equality between human beings, which can foster peaceful co-existence of mankind by establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

Since it was beyond the normal domain of man to discover ultimate the ,the origin of life ,truth regarding the creation of the universe ;and the facts about the life hereafter ,spiritual regime of the Lord the Lord continued to make the necessary revelations ,therefore through His prophets for the benefit and guidance of the progeny of Islamic traditions .Adam on earth therefore tell us that Prophet (صحائف) y parchments of guidance Adam received (fit) from the Lord, and the Lord also exalted Adam to a high status, as recorded in the Qur'an:

In addition to the above, Almighty Allah also reminded Israel about the test and trial of Abraham and about fulfillment thereof by him. Lord also made Kaaba (Makkah) a place of Assembly and a place of prayer for Ishmaelites, as well as, for Israel, as is evident from the verses quoted below:

(124) And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers." (125) Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and We covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il, that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer). (126) And remember Abraham said: "My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its people with fruits,-such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea), and such as reject Faith,-for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire,- an evil destination (indeed)!" (Al-Qur'an, 002.124-126 (Al-Baqara)

Thus, Kaaba was made a place of assembly, a place of safety, and a place of worship for the people; which was sanctified by Abraham and Ishmael for those who compass it round or use it as a place of retreat or prostration. This was enjoined in verse 125 quoted above. We therefore learn that even Moses guided all the Israelites to face

towards south, i.e. towards Kaaba to offer all their sacrifices to the Lord:

He put the table in the Tent, on the north side outside the curtain, and placed on it the bread offered to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded. He put the lampstand in the Tent, on the south side, opposite the table, and there in the LORD's presence he lit the lamps, just as the LORD had commanded. (Exo. 40:22-25 GNB)

Even subsequently, the practice remained the same, and the Israelites have always been facing towards the south to offer their sacrifices at the temple even at Jerusalem. It is perhaps due to their ethnicity or self-interest that they conceal from their people the real purpose of facing towards the south, i.e. towards Kaaba, the ancient House of the Lord rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael.

If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his. (Deu. 21:15-17 KJV)

To authenticate the violation of the Law and to cover the alleged injustice of Abraham and Sarah, the Israelites have not spared even the Lord God of the universe by inserting the following verse in the Bible:

One day Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, was playing with Sarah's son Isaac. Sarah saw them and said to Abraham, "Send this slave and her son away. The son of this woman must not get any part of your wealth, which my son Isaac should inherit." This troubled Abraham very much, because Ishmael also was his son. But God said to Abraham, "Don't be worried about the boy and your slave Hagar. Do whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that you will have the descendants I have promised. I will also give many children to the son of the slave woman, so that they will become a nation. He too is your son." Gen. 21:9-13 GNB)

Ch – 8

THE PROMISED PROPHET

The biblical literature is full of prophecies about the Promised Prophet. The most important among them is the one from Moses who specifically foretold about the advent of the Prophet. After formalization of the Covenant with the people of Israel, Moses had recited the contents of law to the Israelites again and again. He told them to abide by the law of the Lord at all times and not to worship other gods or to lean towards the abominable practices of the people living in Canaan. Almost at the end of his career Moses gave his final instructions fore-warning the people that in the land they were going to occupy they might come across the people who practise divination and look for omens. He told them that they must abide by the law of the Lord in all events and in no case they should follow the practices of those people already living there nor to worship their gods. Law of Moses would always be the perfect guide for them. Anyhow, in the latter days, the Lord God will raise a prophet from among the brethren of Israel to whom they must hearken. Warning them of the pagan practices Moses said:

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee”. (**Deu 18:9-12**)

The afore-stated final instructions of Jesus were of utmost importance for all times to come. Moses had already disclosed to the Israelites all the commandments received from the Lord which were sufficient for the welfare of mankind here and in the hereafter. Moses therefore warned them not to adopt the practices of other people especially divination foretelling, omens or oracles etc. Alas the Israelites never took due advantage of the instruction of

Moses. Instead of trusting the Lord and trying to do his will, they continued looking for other avenues of their salvation and success. Among such prophecies was the advent of a Messiah to re-establish the kingdom of the Israelites, to restore their independence and to deliver them from the yoke of the gentile rulers. Although the Christians believe that the said deliverer Messiah was Jesus Christ yet the Israelites are still looking for him till today. Factually Moses did not foretell advent of any Messiah at all. He, however, knew through revelations that towards the end time there will be an overall perversion of faith and belief. In such a case, he foretold the people about the advent of the last and the greatest prophet of the Lord with a final, immutable and everlasting word of God. The said prophet would make a new covenant with the people covering the entire mankind for all times to come. Moses, therefore, advised the Israelites that they must hearken to the word of that prophet because those who refuse to listen or to obey him will be punished by the Lord. Let us peruse the prophecy from the Old Testament.

16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken

The prayer of the Israelites was accepted by the Lord gracefully and instead of making them hear the voice of the Lord and the great fire the Lord promised to send them a prophet who shall speak to them all the words that the Lord had put in his mouth as we find recorded in the Old Testament.

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deu 18:16-19)

Five points in the prophecy are of utmost importance to identify the Promised Prophet of the Lord:

That the Prophet will be from among the brethren of Israel which means he will not be an Israelites.

That the Prophet will be like Moses

That the Lord will put His words in the mouth of the Prophet

That the Prophet will speak unto them all that the Lord shall command him.

That whosoever will not hearken unto any word spoken by the Prophet shall be held accountable before the Lord.

We shall, therefore, examine each of the signs separately to pin-point the particular Prophet foretold by the Lord as under:

1. Brethren of Israel

The first sign of identification about the Promised Prophet was that he will not be from the Israelites but from their brethren. There is no doubt that Ismail was the undisputed firstborn of Abraham and brother of Isaac, the father of Jacob also known as Israel whose descendants are the Israelites. The Bible has described Ismail as among the brethren of Isaac at various points. As such, the descendants of Isaac and Jacob i.e. Israel or the Israelites while the Ismaelites being the descendants of Ismail or the brethren of the Israelites from whom the Lord God raised the Promised Prophet being the last and the final Messenger of the God to the mankind.

2. The Prophet will be like Moses

According to the assertion of the Israelites, there had been more than hundred thousands prophets among the Israelites. It was, therefore, impossible to pin-point the Promised Prophet without some special identification mark. The Lord, therefore, informed Moses that the Promised Prophet will be like him. In this respect, the internal evidence from the Old Testament is enough to dispel the idea that there ever had been any prophet like Moses among the Israelites as quoted below:

10 And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, 12 And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great

terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel. (Deu 34:10-12)

This self-confession of Israel pertaining perhaps to the time of Ezra or even later period leaves no doubt that there never had been any prophet among the Israelites like Moses. In their eagerness to consecrate Jesus with all the possible blessings of the Lord, the Christians make futile efforts to prove Jesus like Moses which is absolutely baseless. We have strong reasons to believe that Jesus had no conspicuous likeness with Moses while there are numerous aspects of his life which prove him unlike Moses. So far as the likeness of Jesus with Moses is concerned, the Christians assert that Jesus was like Moses because both were the Israelites and both were Prophets as well as messengers of the Lord. Hence, all the prophets of the Israelites are equally like Moses and Jesus enjoys no speciality to prove himself as the only person among them who was like Moses. As compared to this, Jesus was unlike Moses because Moses was simply a messenger of the God whereas the Christians believe him to be God and Saviour of mankind.

Hence, there is hardly any doubt that after Moses, Muhammad was the only prophet who got recorded in his presence the words of the Lord revealed to him. The prophet also rehearsed the words of God verbally again and again so that many people memorized the same exactly as revealed. Hence, the new covenant of the Lord made through prophet Muhammad was the only covenant which stood written on the hearts of the people during the life time of the prophet and even today there might be 15 to 20 million Muslims who can reproduce the entire contents of the Qur'an with utmost accuracy from their hearts. The Qur'an, therefore, is the new covenant foretold by the prophet which is not written on the stones but on the hearts of the people. (Jer 31:31-34)

It is pertinent to note here that two points in the prophecy are of utmost importance to identify the Promised Prophet.

1. That instead of practicing divination or following the practices of other people in Canaan, the Israelites must follow the teachings of the Promised Prophet whom the God would raise among them from within the brethren of the Israelites . We must therefore note that after the end of the era of prophecy in the Israelites God raised Prophet

Muhammad from the Ishmaelites who were the brethren of the Israelites. He was the final and the last Prophet of the Lord deputed for the guidance of entire mankind instead of any particular nation such as Israel.

The second most important point in the prophecy was that the said prophet will be like Moses. We know that perhaps a hundred thousand prophets had been raised from the Israelites but they were from the Israelites not from their brethren i.e. Ishmaelites or descendants of some other Abraham. This has also been confirmed” Deutromony 34:10-12. **Quote**

It was said that the Lord will put his words in the mouth of that prophet and he will tell everything that the Lord commanded him. This shows that it was the speciality of the Promised Prophet that he will rehearse the exact words of God without making any change in them or without adding anything therein. Hence, we find that the Qur'an is the only book containing the divine revelation exactly as dictated by the Lord without the slightest change in the word, phrase or passage of the same. Ever since its revelation the Qur'an it has been preserved in an immutable form without the slightest change in its word, form or text. The Lord has himself taken the responsibility to preserve the book. Hence, in spite of 1500 years we find no change in its words, meanings or contents nor will there be any change till the end of the world.

The people of the Israelites had also been warned to listen the words of the Promised Prophet carefully to do them. In case, someone refuses to listen the Prophet or neglects his teachings, the same will be accountable before the Lord on the day of judgment. The Israelites know full well that although there had been thousands of prophets among them yet none of them was like him as promised by the Lord. Even Jesus in spite of all the proclamation of the Christians had hardly any liking with Moses whereas Prophet Muhammad was the only prophet who was like Moses in many respects as we shall discuss subsequently.

ABRAHAM

The Blessings of Abraham

Although the Bible has not specifically mentioned about the advent of the final Prophet, yet the Islamic traditions trace back the mention of the Promised Prophet since before creation of Adam. Elsewhere we have discussed creation and God's Covenant with each time of the creation and the creatures. Hence, the Lord obtained a covenant firstly from the heavens, the heavenly bodies and the earth. The Lord said

أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

Next were the angels and the mankind while they were still in the form of souls. The prophets were the next to be called for their responsibilities which specifically included a promise from them that they will pay due regards to the last Prophet. Quote"

This shows that each and every prophet of the Lord was duty bound to transmit the message about the advent of the greatest prophet of the Lord in the end times with the final, immutable and everlasting word of God. Hence, we understand that each and every prophet must have discharged his responsibility accordingly. Although we find no record of such messages left by the prophets prior to Abraham, yet the Qur'an tells us that Abraham after raising the walls of Ka'aba at Mecca made specific request to the Lord in the following words:

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ [129-2]

The Bible has no knowledge about the said prophet prior to the prophecy of Moses quoted above. Anyhow, it tells us that when the Lord called Abraham to Canaan.

The said prophecy contained Lord's promise to bless Abraham abundantly and to make him a blessing for all the nations of the world. God said to Abraham," I'll bless those

who bless you but I'll curse those who curse you and through you I'll bless all the nations".

The words of the afore-stated blessings are extremely important. We must, therefore, analyze its contents for proper comprehension of the same.

That the Lord will bless Abraham abundantly and make his name great.

That Abraham will get descendants in such a large number that no one will be able to count them.

That God will make Abraham blessing for all the nations of the world and he will bless those who bless Abraham while the Lord will curse those who curse Abraham.

The Prophet like Moses

The Prophet like Moses or the Promised Prophet was not an ordinary person but an extremely important messenger of God about whom the Lord God had foretold the prophets while they were still in their souls a long period of time before their birth. We said that

INDEX

- Allama Iqbal 229
Ansari 227
Arabian VIII
Arabic VIII, 229, 230
Arberry 227
Asad 227
atmosphere VII
Bāl-e-Jibrīl 229
Beirut 227, 228
Berkeley IX
Bible VII, VIII, IX, X, 228, 229, 230
Britannica 229
Catholic Bible VIII
Chicago 229
Christian VIII
Dar al-Choura 227
Daryabadi 227
Deuteronomy X
E. W. Lane 229
Encyclopaedia VIII
Frederick 227
Genesis X
George Sale 227
Greek VIII
Haluk NurBaki 229
Hebrew VIII
Hebrews X
Indus 229
Isaiah X
Islamabad I, II, VII, 229
Israelites IV
James VIII, IX, X, 228, 229
Javed Nāmāh' 229
Jeremiah X
Jerusalem IX, 230
Jesus VIII
Jewish VIII, X, 228
Jibrael 230
Jonah X
Joseph 230
Karachi 227, 228, 229
Kulliyāt-e-Iqbal 229
Kulliyāt-e-Iqbāl 229
Lahore 227, 228, 229, 230
Latin VIII
Lebanon 227, 228
London IX, 227, 229, 230
Lord VIII
Mahmud Y. Zayid 227
Mark X
Medina 228
Moses 229
Muhammad I, II, VII, 227, 228, 229, 230
Muhsin Khan 228, 230
N. J. Dawood 227
New Testament VIII, X
New World Order I
Old Testament VIII
Oxford IX
Pakistan I, II, 228, 229
Pentateuch VIII
Persian 229
Pickthall 227
Psalms X
Rodwell 227
Romans X
Ruh 230
Sahih Muslim 228
Slavery IV
Solomon X
St. Paul IX, 230
Sunni 227, 228
The Koran 227
The Message 227
Titus X
Torah VIII
Urdu 227, 228, 229, 230
Urdū' 229
Vulgate IX
Zafar Ishaq 227

BIBLIOGRAPHY

• Qur'an:

- *The Message of the Qur'an*, tr. Muhammad Asad, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980.
- *The Holy Qur'an*, tr. Syed Abul A'la Maududi, English Rendering by M. Akbar, A.A. Kamal (Lahore: Isl. Publications, 2008).
- *The Holy Qur'an*, tr, A. Yusuf Ali Beirut: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karīm, AH 1403.
- *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, an Explanatory tr. by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, (New York: A Mentor Book, 1954).
- *The Koran Interpreted*, tr. A. J. Arberry, Oxf. Univ. Press, 1983.
- *The Koran*, tr. George Sale, London: Frederick Warne & Co Ltd., n.d.
- *Tafsir Ul Qur'an*, tr. Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Karachi: Darul – Ishaat Urdu Bazar, 1991.
- Towards Understanding the Qur'an Zafar Ishaq Ansari, eng. Tr. Of Tafheem ul Qur'an, by Maulana Mawdūdī, (verse 28:4)
- J. M. Rodwell, *The Koran* (Dent: London: Everyman's Library, NY, 1977)
- Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 6th (Revised.) Edition, 1973.
- S. A. A. Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, Abridged Version of *Tafhim al- Qur'an*, tr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation), 2007.
- Abu'Ala, Mawdūdī *The Meaning of the Qur'an* (Lahore: Isl. Publ. (Pvt) Ltd., 3-E, Shahalam Market, 2000),
- N. J. Dawood's Trans. Checked and Revised by Mahmud Y. Zayid; and approved by The Supreme Sunni and Shii Councils of the Rep. of Lebanon: Dar al-Choura, 1980

-
- Sir M. Zafrullah Khan, *The Qur'an* (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 2nd Ed. Rvsd. 1975), p. 629.
 - *Tafsir-Ul-Qur'an*, (Karachi; Darul-Ishaat, Urdu Bazar 1 Pakistan, 1991),
 - *The Noble Qur'an*, Tr. Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali And Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, Saudi Arabia 1st Ed. 2000).
 - The Qur'an , The Supreme Sunni and Shii Councils of the Rep. of Lebanon, Dar Al-Choura, Beirut, 1980.

 - **Hadith:**
 - *Abu Dawud*, Eng. Tr. by Prof. Ahmad Hassan, Centre for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, University of Southern California (USC.EDU.ORG)
 - *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, tr. by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Islamic University Al-Medina Al-Munawwara, (Dar Al Arabia, Beirut, Lebanon, 1980)
 - *Sahih Muslim*, Translator: Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, Centre for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, University of Southern California (USC.EDU.ORG)
 - *Muatta Imam Malik*, tr by M. Rahimuddin,, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1985)
 - Allama Sharafuddin al-Musawi, *Al-Nass Wal-Ijtihad*, (al-islam.org).
 - Takhreej-ul-Hadith, Al-muhaddith Albani, *Sahih Aladab Almufrad*.

 - **Bible:**
 - Authorized/ King James Version.
 - *Good News Bible* – 2nd Edn., HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. UK, 1995.
 - New American Standard Bible. A Division of Gospel Light Publications, California, 1973.
 - The Holy Bible, New American Catholic Edn. Benziger Bros., Inc. 1958.

- *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Ed. James Hastings. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, 1904.

▪ **Other Books:**

- Allama Iqbal, '*Darb-e-Kāilm*', i.e. 'The Stroke of Moses' in *Kulliyat-e-Iqbal Urdu*, i.e. 'Complete Urdu Works of Iqbal (Lahore: Sh. Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1990).
- Allama Iqbāl, *Bāl-e-Jibrīl*, in '*Kulliyāt-e-Iqbāl--Urdū*' (Lahore: Iqbāl Academy Pakistan, 2007).
- *The Oxford Dictionary Of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross, published 1997, Oxf. Uni. Press.
- *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1993, Oxford University Press.
- Muhammad Munir, *The Universe Beyond*, (Islamabad: Pangraphics (Private) Ltd., 1994).
- *Javed Nāmāh*', *Kulliyāt-e-Iqbal Persian* (Lahore: Sh. Ghulām Ali & Sons, 1990).
- Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*' (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publ., 2004).
- Allama Iqbal, *Zaboore-e-Ajam (Persian)*, (Lahore: Pakistan Times Press, 1966).
- Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *Asrar-o-Rumooz*, (Lahore: 1964).
- Dr. Haluk NurBaki, *Verses from the Holy Koran and the Facts of Science*, (Karachi: Indus Publishing Corporation, 1992).
- Dr. Majid Ali Khan, *Islam on Origin and Evolution of Life* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Kashmiri Bazar, 1978).
- Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, *Zarb-e-Kaleem (Urdu) in Kulliyat-e-Iqbal* (Lahore: Ghazni Street, Urdu Bazar, 1995).
- E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: The Islamic Texts Society, ND).
- *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: William Benton, 1966).

-
- Ghulam Ahmad Pervez (1903 – 1985), *Islam, A Challenge to Religion* (Lahore: Tolu-e-Islam Trust, 1989)
 - Imām Rāghib Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Tahqīq-i-Mawād-i-Lughat al'Arab al-Mut'allaqah bi'l Qur'an*.
 - Iqbal, *Bal-e-Jibrael (Urdu) in Kulliyat-e-Iqbal*, poem 'Masjid-e-Qurtuba',
 - Max Jammer, *Einstein and Religion* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1999),.
 - Rev. Joseph J. Baierl, S.T.D, *The Creed Explained* (Rochester N.Y: Art Print Shop, 77, St. Paul Street, 1943).
 - *Arabic-Eng. Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, Elsaid M. Badawi, Muhammad Abdul Haleem, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008)
 - *The Big Book of Angels* by the editors of *Beliefnet* (Heatherton: VIC 3202, Australia, Hinklers Books Pty Ltd, 2003),
 - *The Enc. of Islam*, (Leiden:: E. J. Brill, Netherlands, 1993), sv 'NAFS', 7:880
 - *The New Jerusalem Bible, Pocket edition*. Gen 1:26-27 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), p, 5.
 - *The Noble Qur'an* 33:69-71, tr. Dr. Taqi-ud-Dīn Al-Hilālī and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh: Darussalam, KSA., 2000].
- Vol. II of *Maqalat-e-Hakeem* compiled by Shahid Hussain Razaqi (Idara-e-Saqaft-e-Islamiyyah, Club Road Lahore).
- Williston Walker, *A history of the Christian Church*, 3rd Ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946) p. 398.