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WHO WAS SACRIFICED

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated

Primarily to

The Almighty Allah

The All-Compassionate, The All-Merciful

And then to the

Students and scholars engaged in the

Comparative study of the teachings of

Revealed religions.

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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	Masoretic /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.
صلواته عليه وسلم	peace and blessings of Allah upon him.
p/pp	Page/pages.
P	Priestly tradition of the OT of the Bible.
Pbl/pbgs	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 Pbshrs. 1976)
MT	The Torah, The Masoretic 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.
NLT ^{r.}	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
Jon. or Jon	Jonah	Sg	(=Song of Songs)
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

WHO WAS SACRIFICED: ISAAC OR ISHMAEL?

There has been long outstanding controversy over the issue of the sacrifice of a son by Prophet Abraham on a commandment from God. The Muslims believe that it was Hazrat Ismael (Ishmael) who was offered to Allah (God) as a sacrifice. On the other hand, the Jews and the Christians maintain that it was Isaac and not Ishmael who was offered as an oblation to the Lord. The latter argue that God had specifically mentioned the name of Isaac to be sacrificed before the Lord as is evident from Gen. 22:2. It is also said that although the Quran, too, has narrated the episode of the sacrifice, yet there is no mention of the name of the son whom Abraham offered for the sacrifice. It is argued that the Bible named Isaac specifically for the sacrifice while the Quran did not refute the same categorically; therefore, it leaves no room for any speculation in favor of Ishmael. The unending debate needs, therefore, further in-depth study of the background, the material evidence, and the arguments of both the view points to arrive at a balanced and well-founded judgment in the matter.

Before analyzing and comparing the narratives of sacrifice in the Bible as well as in the Quran and other Islamic traditions, it will be useful to have a short review of the background of the episode and also the particular attitude of the Muslims as well as of the Jews about their history, culture and faith.

Our study reveals that the Jewish and the Christian priorities differ from the priorities of the Muslims. As such, both groups interpret their history and religious traditions differently and in accordance with their own creed and interests. The same event, therefore, finds different description and creates contrasting impact on the Muslims as compared with the Jews or the Christians. We, therefore, observe that the Jewish interpretations stress on the

oneness of God and observance of law. Besides this, **they attach priority to the temporal benefits for the people of Israel.** The Christians, on the other hand, attach pivotal importance to faith in Jesus Christ as the son of God and saviour of mankind. To them, confession of faith by word of mouth is enough for salvation. The super-importance of Jesus has replaced the worship of God with the worship of Jesus Christ through whom they expect holiness, eternal life and salvation in the hereafter. As compared with this, a true Muslim is strict monotheist and worships no one except Allah, the one and the only Lord God of the universe. The Muslims consider themselves to be the created slaves of the Almighty and they surrender their will to the will of the Lord. A true Muslim, as such, is one who surrenders himself unconditionally to all the commandments of the Lord and his top priority is to please Him. Everything else has a secondary importance for the Muslims. They are, therefore, duty-bound to worship the Lord God and to obey all his commandments without insisting on any contractual reciprocity from the Lord whatsoever. They also implore for the mercy and forgiveness of Allah for even anything done inadvertently by them against the commandments of God while the approval or appreciation of their services by Allah is the ultimate cherished desire of the Muslims. A Muslim, therefore, has full faith in God and never feels disgusted or disgruntled for the acts of God even in the most trying circumstances. The one who rebels against the God or has any complaint against Him, is no longer a Muslim in the true sense of the term. As such, the **Material rewards in this world are always subordinate to the moral obligations of a Muslim towards his creator.** Since the Muslims believe in one eternal God of the universe, therefore, they are bound to believe in all prophets of Lord from Adam to Muhammad (PBUH). This implies that there had been unbroken continuity in the revelation when all the prophets transmitted the same essential Faith leading to peace and universal brotherhood of man based on oneness of God. There is, as such, a marked difference between the faith and culture of the Muslims as compared with those of

the Israelites and the Christians which we shall discuss in detail subsequently.

JEWISH FAITH AND CULTURE

As regards the Jews, we find that in their practical life, they attach secondary importance to faith and morality as compared with power, wealth and supremacy of the Israelites. The core of the Scripture is, therefore, **the nation of the Israelites**. To them, God has importance only as the God and benefactor of the Israelites Who has to protect the interests of Israel. **The main concern of the Israelites has always been the immediate material benefits and superiority of Israel over all other nations of the world.** They have always been an ethnic group who give material interpretation to everything in history, culture and faith. Hence, all the written records of the Israelites revolve around the possession of power, land and wealth. Although the law of Moses contained strict moral precepts for the Israelites, yet the same had no impact to bring any improvement in the moral aspect of the Israelites simply because they had no clear-cut concept of the life after death. The Old Testament is silent about any retribution for the evil done or any reward for good deeds of the righteous one in the hereafter. There is no mention of any recompense in the next world for hardships, sufferings, or deprivation faced by the steadfast believers in the way of God. The Jews do not expect any perdition for sins, misdeeds or some other flagrant violation of the commandments of God in the Hereafter. All rewards, retrIBUTions, or punishments are expected in this world and nothing is carried over for accountability on the Day of Judgment. It was, perhaps, in the post exilic period that certain sects such as Pharisees among the Israelites started believing in the resurrection and life after death. Even so, the Jews believed that being the people of God, only they

were entitled to enter the paradise. In case, any of them would be put into the Hell, that would be only for a short duration and they would soon get rid of it. بِأَمْ مُعْدُودَه

In view of the above, the Jews only cared for immediate and temporal benefits of the Israelites. Their first interest being the overall material benefits, the Israelites ignored and also rebelled against the Commandments of the Lord that were distasteful to them. They, therefore, made various additions, deletions, and distortions in the Holy Writ to make the Scripture accord the needs of the race. Many narrations in the Genesis convey anthropomorphic concepts about the attributes of God which show their reflection in the overall character and conduct of the Israelites in the world. This is so because only a firm faith in the transcending of God with His attributes of all-knowing, all-wise, omnipotent and omniscient God can direct the mankind towards obedience to His commandments. God-consciousness and sense of accountability on the Day of Judgment had always been the main factors enforcing piety and righteousness. Such concepts, however, had been absent from the theological concepts of the Israelites. As against this, the concept that man was created in the likeness of God suggests human shortcomings in God which sets us free from any accountability before the Lord simply because the Lord has no perfect knowledge of our misdeeds. Man, therefore, had no fear from the Lord and needed only to conceal his crimes from other human beings.

ISRAEL'S CONCEPT OF GOD

Initially most of the Israelites followed the teachings of Moses and believed that there was only one God of the universe. Subsequently, when they came in touch with other nations in and around Canaan, some of the Israelites found attraction in gods worshipped by them. They, therefore, started mingling with the Canaanites to worship other gods besides Yahweh, the Lord God of Israel. For superiority of the Israelites, however, they believed that Yahweh, the God of Israel was the greatest among the gods

while other nations, too, had their gods who were lesser gods as compared with the God of Israel. They, therefore, compromised on the monotheism and transcendence of one and the only God of the universe. Since the Israelites refused to tolerate other nations to share their God, their lands and the Holiness, therefore, they found it convenient to assign other gods to their rivals retaining for themselves the exclusive privilege of the people of God Yahweh.

The excessively developed sense of possessiveness of the Israelites made Yahweh the sole property of Israel. As such, they developed the concept that though Yahweh was the greatest among the gods, yet he was only the God of the Israelites. Other nations had their own gods but they did not share Yahweh with the Israelites. To establish the exclusive and personal relationship with the Lord, they introduced the commandments such as quoted below:

"And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus **saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn**".¹

God was so much concerned about Israel that He said:

And **I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians**, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.²

To make God the exclusive property of Israel, all other nations of the world were assigned other deities being the lesser or tribal gods as compared with the Lord God of Israel. In the new arrangement, the Lord God of the universe was redefined as the Lord God of Israel alone. The Israelites did not entertain the right of the other nations of the world to join them in the worship of the God of Israel. That the God was the God of Israel alone has always been the main slogan of the Israelites, and we find the same

¹ Ex 4:22 KJV.

² Ex 3:8-9 KJV.

repeated about 199 times in the Old Testament. It is not the story of the past but the same is a living fiber of the Israeli cult till today. It is interesting to note that during the World War I, Dr. Weizman, a Jew and a great master of Chemistry, helped Britain in the defeat of their foes. Consequently, the Balfour Declaration 1917 and thereafter the creation of Israel was only the fulfillment of the reward promised to Dr. Weizman by the Britishers.³ In the preface to the aforesaid book, we find the following:

At the opening of the first Parliament, Dr. Weizman , in his speech when taking the oath as the first President of the new Israel State, said: "At this moment in our history, let us give thanks and praise to **the God of Israel Who** in His mercy has granted us the privilege of witnessing the redemption of our people, after centuries of affliction and suffering.⁴

The rigid ethnicity and self interest of Israel have, therefore, been obstructing the peaceful co-existence among the nations, and is also the continuous source of trouble for them and other nations in the world. This obstructs the unity of mankind which cannot be imagined without a firm faith in the oneness of the creator. The Israeli prejudice and self-proclaimed superiority over other nations have always persisted in the past and is likely to continue in future. Anyhow, it is a fact that the personal benefits and projections of Israel led to the acceptance of plurality of gods and reduction in the infinite domain of the Lord. This created a great schism regarding love and faith between and among the nations because it refused other people, the universal brotherhood and peace on the basis of unifying belief in one and the only Lord of the universe.

In addition to this, the Israelites have also tried to establish their exclusive claims on Prophet Abraham, the blessings through him, and also the Land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession of the Israelites. For this purpose, they indulged in the character assassination of all the descendants of Abraham who were not the direct ancestors of the Israelites. Firstly, they blasphemed Lot and his

³ Samuel Schor, *Palestine and the Bible*, (London 1948), p. 118-119.

⁴ Samuel Schor, *Palestine and the Bible*, (London 1948), p. viii.

daughters with incest. Secondly, they depicted Ishmael as born of a slave girl and declared him an outcast or a pariah. Thereafter, the Israelites censured Esau as a playful and irresponsible person and pretended to have deprived him of the inheritance as well as blessings as the first born of Isaac. This was so because the Moabites and the Ammonites were descendants of Lot, and the Edomites were the descendants of Esau who resisted their invasions and opposed them severely during the post-Exodus adventures of Israel. The Israelites, therefore, levelled various allegations against them and their distinguished forefathers as we find recorded in the Genesis. Although the Israelites have hardly been about 5% of the total descendants of Abraham, yet they have tried to pose to be the only genuine descendants of the patriarch, claiming all the blessings on Abraham including the everlasting right to possess the entire land of Canaan. **It was also intolerable for the Israelites that any other people might claim the sanctifying grace such as the sacrifice of Ishmael along with blessings of the Lord.**

The insertion of the name of Isaac in the Gen 22:2 after 'your only son', therefore, reflects the same priorities of the Israelites. Factually, the episode of sacrifice pertains to Ishmael who had been the only son of Abraham for 14 years before the birth of Isaac while the latter had never been the only son of Abraham throughout his life. The venue of sacrifice was Mount Marwah (Moriah) near Kaaba at Makkah. Ever since the sacrifice of Ishmael, the Arabs have been sacrificing their animals at Makkah in commemoration of the sacrifice of Ishmael. The tradition has been kept alive by the Muslims till today and they sacrifice tens of millions of animals each year at Makkah and other places throughout the world on tenth of Zil-Hajj each year. As against this, **a single sheep, goat or animal has never been sacrificed by the Israelites to commemorate the so-called sacrifice of Isaac which is the conclusive proof that the said sacrifice had never been the tradition of the Israelites.**

Another concept which persisted in the Israelites was that God was like man and perhaps shared most of the characteristics and the shortcomings of man (Gen 1:26-27, 5:1). These verses, however, conflict with the following:-

22. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: **23.** Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken (Gen 3:22-23).

Besides suggesting likeness of man with God, the verses quoted above allude to plurality of Gods. We also fail to know as to whether the man was created initially in the likeness of God or He attained his likeness with him/them only after disobeying the commandment of the Lord. Anyhow, the Israelites continued to maintain that God was like man or man was created in his likeness. A corollary of this belief is that God must be sharing all the limitations, the shortcomings, and the weaknesses of man. Naturally, a god shorn off his transcendence in all his attributes becomes like a man in many respects and can only be compared with the human despots or Gods of mythology (Gen 6:4 -7) instead of the all-knowing, all-wise God Almighty sustaining and controlling the entire universe with extreme perfection, vigilance, and authority over the same. If, however, God is like man, then there is nothing to be afraid of Him because He has no perfect knowledge of our acts and deeds. There should be no fear of accountability or standing before Him on the Day of Judgment. Men, therefore, were free to cheat God and keep their misdeeds hidden from Him. Such rudimentary and imperfect concepts paved the way for the Israelites to promote their personal prosperity in the world than to make them worship the Lord wholeheartedly or to fear from accountability before him. The said faulty concept about the attributes of God, therefore, failed to improve moral conduct of the Israelites. They had no idea about the supreme attributes such as all-knowing, all-wise, omniscient and omnipotent God from whom nothing in the universe could be concealed. Even human thought could not remain hidden from the Lord. He had the perfect fore-knowledge of everything to happen in

the future. As against this, the Israelites never believed in the transcendental attributes of the Lord.

Now if human beings are like God and resemble Him, then the Lord God must be sharing the shortcomings of man. One cannot, therefore, visualize the transcendence of God as a being who is omniscient, omnipotent, all seeing, and all wise creator as well as sustainer of the entire universe. The erroneous concept about God is also evident from the following:-

And they (Adam and Eve) heard the voice of the **Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.**⁵

That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they **took them wives of all** which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that **he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.** There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when **the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them,** the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.⁶

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, **and it grieved Him** at His heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.⁷

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.⁸

Then the Lord God came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded (Gen 11:5 KJV)

"There under the tree he (Abraham) served them (i.e. **God and the angels) and they ate .**" (Gen 18:8)

I (God) will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. (Gen 18:21 KJV)

⁵ Gen. 3:8 KJV.

⁶ Gen. 6:2-4 KJV.

⁷ Gen. 6:6-7 KJV.

⁸ Gen. 8:21 KJV.

The Bible is full of such concepts that God walked like men in the Garden during cool of the day, that He had to come down on the spot to see for Himself the sinfulness of Sodom. The Lord God had also to descend to the land to see the city and the tower at Babylonia. That the God smelt sweet savour of the burnt offering and He and His angels ate food like men. God, very often, feels grieved and repents to make man on Earth. The Genesis has it that:-

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." (**Gen 6:4**)

Perhaps, the Christian dogma about Jesus as the son of God also has its origin in the same concept. All this shows that God was just like man and hardly transcended the attributes of man while he shared most of the shortcomings of human beings. Even the opening verses of the Bible reflect the idea of the imperfection of God e.g:

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. **And God saw the light, that it was good:** and God divided the light from the darkness. (Gen 1:3-4 KJV)

The theme that the commandment of the Lord God had succeeded to bring good results has been repeated in verses 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31 of Genesis 1. This suggests that even God did not have any certainty or foreknowledge about the outcome of His commandments. The outcome of the commandment was, perhaps, pleasing Himself because "*God saw that it was good*". Prior to this, God's commandment was subject to trial and error method just like human beings. Besides this, we find the Lord repenting and grieving over certain acts of human beings which, perhaps, did not turn upto His expectations. Like men, the Lord was pleased to smell sweet savor of the burnt offering. With such attributes, the God imagined by the Israelites had a lot of humanity/animality in Him along with all the shortcomings of man. **The said concept of God is, therefore, far from the omnipotent, omniscient, all seeing, and all-wise Lord God of the Universe as per the faith of the Muslims who believe that God cannot be unaware of the treacherous deeds**

of human beings nor can they conceal any act or thought from Him. The Muslims do not believe that they can conceal any of their good or bad deeds from the Lord. As against the Muslims, the Jews did not believe in the omniscience of the Lord. They felt free to commit the inequities without any fear of judgment or punishment in the hereafter. If, therefore, one had a knack to escape the sight of other men and succeeded to reap any material benefits either through cruelty, falsehood, cheating, misrepresentation, or any other immoral act whatsoever, his achievements were really commendable. Such a person became the ideal of the majority of the Jews and instead of despising him, they made him a role model to emulate. Means did not matter if they resulted in the attainment of wealth, fame, position, or superiority of Israel over others. Any Israelite who succeeded in the accomplishment of any temporal benefit through fraud, forgery, deception, or even immodesty was not to be denounced for such a shameful act. On the other hand, such an action was highly appreciated and most often the writers of the Bible managed divine approval, or even intervention of God to promote the cause of Israel. Instead of any remorse or disapproval, the Jews considered their cunningness and deceptive acts as a necessary and appreciable quality for the Jews. The Bible and the history of Israel are, therefore, replete with the examples of the acts of immorality covered by special commandments of the Lord. Worldly interests of Israel always enjoyed priority over Moral and spiritual values of the community. They, therefore, could not think of any other motive of Abraham to leave Haran for Canaan except the allurement of numerous descendants to possess the entire land of Canaan forever.

1. Abraham leaves Haran on God's promise to give him descendants and land

The Bible has nothing to report about the childhood and the early life of Abraham at Ur or elsewhere. It simply tells us that while at Ur, Abraham married Sarai who was unable to

bear children. Originally Terah, the father of Abraham, took the initiative to leave Ur for Canaan for the reasons not known to the writers of the Genesis. It is said that Terah took his son Abraham, his grandson Lot, and his daughter-in-law Sarai with him. They went as far as Haran and settled there (Gen 11:29-31). The Genesis does not tell us as to why Terah stopped at Haran and did not proceed to his original destination. Anyhow, the Genesis also has another narrative conflicting with the aforesaid statements as we find in the following:

"The Lord said to Abraham Leave your native land, your relatives, and your father's home, and go into a country that I am going to show you. I will give you many descendants and they will become a great nation. (Gen. 12:1-2 GNB)

As stated earlier, the native land of Abraham was Ur and not Haran. Abraham had already left his relatives and his father's home at Ur, and had to leave only his father at Haran before moving to Canaan. Subsequently, while making covenant with Abraham, Lord said to him:

I am the Lord who lead you out of Ur in Babylonia to give you this land as your own. (Gen. 15:7 GNB)

The verses mentioned above contradict the verse 31 of the Gen. 11 which shows that Abraham had to accompany his father Terah to leave Ur i.e. his native place. The commentators of the Bible and the apologists are, therefore, unable to resolve the issue whether Abraham left Ur for Canaan on Terah's initiation or he had to go there on commandment/inducement from the Lord as described in Gen 12:1-3.

In Canaan, Abraham reached Shechem where the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him:

This is the country that I am going to give to your descendants. (Gen. 12:7 GNB)

The Lord made a covenant with Abraham and said:

I promise to give your descendants all this land from the border of Egypt to the River Euphrates, including the lands of ... (Gen. 15:18-19)

All this proves that Abraham initially moved from Haran to Canaan with the God's assurance of giving him so many descendants that nobody will be able to count them. The said descendants would hold the entire land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. Thus, according to the Genesis, **Abraham had no other purpose to go to Canaan except getting innumerable descendants and the possession of the Promised Land.**

2. Covenant Promising Great Wealth for Israel

During a covenant with Abraham, God said to him:

Your descendants will be strangers in foreign land. They will be treated cruelly for four hundred years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them. And **when they leave that foreign land they will take great wealth with them.** (Gen. 15:13-14 GNB)

We find the aforesaid covenant being fulfilled with the instructions from Moses as stated below:

The Israelites had done as Moses had said, and had asked the Egyptians for gold and silver jewellery and for clothing. 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. (Ex. 12:35-36 GNB)

Look! how convenient it has been for the composers of the Genesis to involve God as well as Moses to promote the immoral act of deceiving and robbing silver and gold of the Egyptians. To further sanctify the immoral act, it has been shown that the same was performed as predestined and foretold by God and done under advice and supervision of Moses, the greatest prophet of Israel. This should have been so, because the motto of Israel had always been to reap material benefits, no matter with fair or foul means.

3. The Main Issue: Inheritance of Abraham

God had already said to Abraham about Sarah that:

I will bless her and I will give you a son by her. I will bless her and she will become a mother of nations and there will be kings among her descendants. (Gen. 17:16)

We also read that after hearing the Good News of Isaac, Abraham asked God:

Why not let Ishmael be my heir. (Gen 17:18 GNB)

But God said:

No Your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you will name him Isaac. I will keep my covenant with him and with his descendants forever. It is an everlasting covenant. (Gen. 17:19 GNB)

We must, therefore, keep in view the aforesaid particular background of the blessings of God for Abraham and Sarah, especially denominating the descendants of Isaac as the **sole inheritors of the covenant as well as the Promised Land**. Ishmael and Hagar were, therefore, unwanted persons and had to be cast out though on the flimsy excuse that Sarah saw Ishmael playing with Isaac. Sarah, reportedly, could not tolerate Ishmael or Hagar to have any share in the inheritance of Abraham which she desired to be inherited by Isaac alone. The unlawful and unjustified atrocity meted out to Hagar and Ishmael by throwing them into the wilderness to die in despair with the alleged approval of God had the same end in view. The core of the episode was inheritance by Isaac and his descendants of all the blessings and the Land. For this purpose, Sarah alone had adopted a 'tigerish' attitude towards Hagar and her son Ishmael who were cast out, merely, with the provisions of some food and a bottle of water. All other wealth of very rich Abraham was preserved only for Isaac by sheer injustice and violation of the prevailing customs and the Law of the Lord. Alas! No such inheritance enriched Isaac, Jacob or their descendants because they did not enjoy any peace or prosperity up to their emigration to Egypt. As against them, those who were allegedly cursed and deprived of the inheritance enjoyed all type of affluence along with proprietary rights and authority over vast tracts of land.

Since the relentless and unjustified demand of Sarai perturbed Abraham too much and he was hesitant to cast out Ishmael and Hagar, therefore, God was again brought in to patronize the cruelty of Sarah by his special commandment to Abraham, as under:

Do not be worried about the boy and your slave Hagar. **Do whatever Sara tells you.** Because it is through Isaac that you will have the descendants I have promised." (Gen. 21:21)

Form the foregoing, it is clear that according to the Bible, even the Divine purpose was to make Isaac and his descendants, the inheritors of the everlasting covenant of holding the Promised Land forever. This was the main object for which God said to Abraham 'to do whatever Sarah tells him to do'. Eventually Ishmael, the first born and prime inheritor of Abraham was cast out to die in the desert so that all the blessings, the riches and the Promised Land might be inherited only by Isaac and his descendants. As such, the stage was set for the comedy to reach its climax. God's long outstanding promise of inheritance to Isaac and his descendants was almost achieved, ensuring a promising future for Isaac to live happily ever after. The actual history, however, did not turn up to the wishful thinking of the Israelites. Isaac never had super-abundance of wealth nor any enviable role play in life. So far as his descendants are concerned, we observe that except for a few centuries during and after the reign of King David, they usually lived oppressed, deprived, depraved and homeless among other nations of the world.

THE ANTI-CLIMAX

Contrary to the plan of Sarah, we find a dramatic turn in the story, confronting abruptly Abraham and Sarah with the anti-climax. It was the Commandment of God to Abraham, as quoted below:

"And he (God) said, Take now thy son, **thine only son Isaac**, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22:2 KJV)

The said commandment might have proved a bolt from the blue from Sarah shattering all her sweet dreams. Keeping in view her utmost desire to make Isaac the sole inheritor of Abraham, the commandment to sacrifice Isaac could, in no case, be acceptable to her. She had already

transgressed the divine law of inheritance only to make Isaac inherit the entire wealth of Abraham. Even God sided with her to cast out Ishmael and Hagar only to fulfill the desire of Sarah. Abraham, too, was not in a position to sacrifice Isaac without her permission simply because the Lord had commanded him to '**do whatever Sarah tells you**' (Gen 21:12). Since Sarah neither consented nor did allow Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, therefore, it was impossible for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac without her permission. In view of Sarah's determination to make Isaac the sole inheritor of Abraham, there was no likelihood that she could agree to apply the commandment to her son Isaac, sparing Ishmael, the first born of Abraham, without a protest especially when it was against the Divine Law. She knew that only the first born belonged to the Lord and Ishmael was the only dedicated son of Abraham eligible for the said sacrifice. As such, there could be no plausibility in the assumption that Sarah could have ever agreed to sacrifice Isaac to make Ishmael the sole inheritor of the wealth of Abraham.

Keeping in view the repeated assurances of God to grant numerous descendants through Isaac to possess the entire land of Canaan, there seems to be no possibility of compliance of the commandment as a routine matter and without a single word of protest against the 'Divine perversity' of backing out from all earlier assurances with the family. The abrupt commandment of sacrifice of Isaac being a great upset to the plans of Sarah would have shattered the entire faith and dependability on God. Abraham, therefore, could not be expected to set off to the place of sacrifice wordlessly to comply with the commandment of God, Who had betrayed the trust reposed in Him.

We also know that Abraham was the person who had confrontation with the Lord to plead boldly to save the city and the populace of Sodom (Gen. 18:23-33). It was natural, therefore, for Abraham to resolve the issue with the Almighty about the commandment contradicting all

God's assurances to Abraham during the last 24 years before he could proceed to comply with the same.

We also note that 'thine only son' and 'Isaac' (Gen 22:2) are inconsistent with each other. The term 'thine only son Isaac' is a mis-statement of facts because Ishmael was admittedly the first born of Abraham and as per law, he stood dedicated to the Lord. Isaac was neither the only son of Abraham nor was he eligible for the sacrifice. Sarah had cast out Hagar and Ishmael only to make Isaac the sole inheritor of the wealth of Abraham. As such, the commandment of God, quoted above, annuls the everlasting law of the Lord besides contradicting all the earlier repeated assurances of God to give Abraham descendants only through Isaac, to possess the entire land of Canaan forever (Gen 17:8, 16 and 19).

Sarah Could Hardly Allow the Sacrifice of Isaac

The Genesis depicts Sarah as a hard-hearted, greedy, and jealous woman who insisted on retaining the entire inheritance of Abraham for Isaac in contravention of the law of the Lord. Her main interest was to make Isaac inherit the entire wealth of Abraham. Ishmael and his mother were cast out only with the purpose that Ishmael should not share any inheritance with her son Isaac. Since her desire was extremely selfish as well as violative of the Law of the Lord, therefore, the composers of the Genesis had to introduce a special commandment to fulfill the purpose of Sarah wherein God said to Abraham:-

"Do whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that you will get the descendants I have promised." (Gen. 21:12 b, GNB)

It was, therefore, imperative for Abraham to obtain prior clearance and consent from Sarah before proceeding to do anything with Isaac. Besides this, Sarah knew that the commandment pertained to the only son of Abraham and not the only son of Sarah. **Isaac had never been the only son of Abraham. Therefore, he was not the addressee of the commandment. As such, Sarah was**

under no obligation to offer her son unnecessarily to save Ishmael the only eligible candidate for the sacrifice. She also enjoyed the prerogative to order Abraham to offer Ishmael because as per commandment of the Lord, he was obliged to obey Sarah (Gen 21:12b). In view of this, it was within Sarah's power to tell Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael so that the cherished desire of Sarah to make Isaac inheritor of Abraham could be settled once for all. Under the circumstances, only a fool can assume that Abraham might have proceeded to offer Isaac for sacrifice in contravention of the customs prevailing in the society, law of the Lord and disapproval of Sarah. Had Isaac been the victim of sacrifice, Sarah could have in no case been ignored. Since there is no evidence that Sarah was ever consulted or she consented to the sacrifice of Isaac, therefore, it is inconceivable that Abraham could even think of offering Isaac as an oblation, sparing Ishmael, the mandatory victim of the same. Due to the materialistic and temporal priorities of Sarah as depicted by the Genesis, there was no possibility of her agreeing to sacrifice her son. We also know that God's commandments have no contradiction at all. As in the case of Jacob and Esau, it was the eagerness of the Israelites to elevate Isaac in comparison with Ishmael by shifting the sanctifying grace from him to Isaac. As such, the insertion of Isaac after '*thy only son*' (Gen 22:2) has caused the contradiction as well as confusion in the text. Ishmael had admittedly been the only son of Abraham for 14 years upto the birth of Isaac. It was he who, due to his dedication to the Lord, stood separated from the family. Ishmael was, therefore, the only eligible victim of the sacrifice in accordance with the Law. Only the sacrifice of Ishmael could have pleased Sarah who would have felt satisfied by obliterating even the remotest chance of Ishmael's inheriting two third of wealth of Abraham. Besides settling the core issue of inheritance, the main objective of Sarah to get rid of Ishmael could be achieved by elimination of the first born of Abraham. We, therefore, find no possibility of the substitution of Isaac for Ishmael even though the Israelites pretend the same. As such, the mere insertion of the name of Isaac in the

Genesis 22:2 failed to make it the tradition of the Israelites. History, however, shows that the tradition of sacrifice of Ishmael has been kept alive by the Arabs ever since the time of Abraham to the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who, too, made it a compulsory rite for the Muslims throughout the world. The perversion of facts by the Israelites, therefore, has no substance in it.

TEMPORAL VS. MORAL PRIORITIES OF ISRAEL

Before proceeding further, we shall examine a few examples of alleged falsehood, deception, greediness, wavering faith, materialistic as well as immoral character assigned to the patriarchs by the writers of the Genesis. The Muslims do not believe in the filthy allegations levelled against the patriarchs and they take the same as pure fabrications of the writers of the Genesis who painted their forefathers in accordance with the characteristics prevailing in the Israelites a thousand years after the age of the patriarchs. The afore-stated bent of mind of the compilers of the Genesis is obvious from the instances quoted below:

1. Abraham Becomes Rich by Deceiving two Kings

The Genesis (12:10-16) tells us that due to a famine in Canaan, Abraham and his wife decided to enter Egypt. Due to an assumed risk to his life, on account of his beautiful wife Sarai, he induced her to tell a lie and to pretend that she was a sister of Abraham. The king of Egypt took Sarah to his palace and because of her, he treated Abraham well and gave flocks of sheep and goats, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels to Abraham. It is astonishing to note that God took no cognizance of the falsehood, deception and immodesty of the Patriarch while He plagued the king of Egypt to save Sarai from his hand. Instead of expressing any disapproval on the alleged immoral and shameful act of Abraham, the writer of the Genesis has rather appreciated the material benefits reaped by Abraham in lending his wife to the king as we find hereunder:

Abram was a very rich man, with sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as, silver and gold. (Gen. 13:2 GNB)

(ii) The abovementioned experience, perhaps, encouraged Abraham to repeat the fruitful incident while living at Gerar:

"And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah" (Gen. 20:2 KJV).

Again God did not reprimand Abraham for the nefarious act and the deception but He immediately intervened to save Sarai from Abimelech. Like the king of Egypt, Abimelech, too, gave Abraham sheep, cattle, slaves, and a thousand pieces of silver. The repeated story of exchanging wealth with the modesty of Sarah contains a technique and a lesson for the Israelites to deceive and rob the rich people or the kings of their wealth fraudulently without any reciprocal service or benefit to them.

(iii) As asserted in the Genesis, the above-mentioned profitable track was also adopted subsequently by Isaac while living at Gerar. Like his father, he also told a lie, and said about his wife Rebecca:

"That she was his sister". (Gen. 26:6 GNB)

The story does not tell us as to whether or not Isaac succeeded to grab more wealth, yet it also does not disdain the act. The Genesis also does not show any hatred against the detestable and most insulting remarks of Abimelech hitting Isaac severely.

And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lain with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. (Gen 26:10 KJV)

This shows that Abimelech, the pagan king, was quite conscious of his guilt while Isaac the Prophet had no such sense of the inequity. Anyhow, the outcome of vital importance to the writers of the Genesis has been reported as under:

He (Isaac) continued to prosper and became a very rich man. (Gen 26:13 GNB)

Factually, the instances quoted above have a lesson for the Israelites that material gains must be the first priority of the Israelites even if they have to sacrifice all familial relationships, moral values and even the commandments of the Lord.

2. Ruthless Treatment of Jacob with Esau

Gen 25 tells us that Esau became a skillful hunter and his father enjoyed eating the animals Esau used to kill. One day when Esau returned home from hunting, he found Jacob cooking some bean soup. Esau was very hungry and said to Jacob:

"I am starving. Give me some of that red stuff. ... Jacob answered, I will give it to you if you give me your rights as first born son".
(Gen. 25:31)

Reportedly, under the dire need, Esau agreed:

"Then Jacob gave him some bread and some of the soup". (Gen. 25:34 GNB)

Instead of showing profound hatred against cruel treatment of Jacob with his real elder brother, the composer of the Genesis subjected Esau to criticism as under:-

"That was all Esau cared about his rights as the first born son".
(Gen. 25:34)

Any sane person will be astonished to observe the moral standard of the composer appreciating the robber showing no sympathy for the robbed one. In spite of this, the story has a lesson for the Israelites not to spare even the throat of your real elder brother to derive material benefits, if any. More astounding than this are the words "Esau despised his birth right" used as a title by the expositors while commenting on Gen 25:34 (The Expositors Dictionary of Text, page 50, volume 1, London, Copyright 1910). Instead of despising the alleged wickedness of Jacob, the aforesaid expositor calls to his help. Dr. Marcus Dods who says that:

"It is perhaps worth noticing that the birthright in Ishmael's line, the guardianship of the temple at Mecca, passed from one branch of the family to another in a precisely similar way. We read that when the guardianship of the temple and the governorship of the town fell into the hands of Abu Gabshan a weak and silly man, Cosa, one of Mohammed's ancestors, circumvented him while in a drunken humor, and bought of him the keys of the temple, and with them the presidency of it, for a bottle of wine. But Abu Gabshan being gotten out of his drunken fit, sufficiently repented of his foolish bargain, from whence grew these proverbs among the Arabs: More vexed with late repentance than Abu Gabshan; and more silly than Abu Gabshan - which are usually said of

those who part with a thing of great moment for a small matter".

Dr. Marcus Dods has been acknowledged as a renowned scholar and an eminent expositor of the Bible. Normally learning makes a man broad-minded and elevates him to new heights free from jealousy, injustice, and unfounded bias against others. Unluckily, we find no such qualities in the said scholar because he could not get rid of his predisposition against the Arabs and the Muslims. Finding no plausible excuse for the alleged misconduct of Jacob, Dr. Dods resorted to spit his venom on Ishmaelites without any relevance of the instance to the despicable deal between Jacob and Esau. Evidently, no comparison could be drawn between the mal-treatment of Jacob with his real elder brother and the distorted version relating to the story of Cosai and Abu Gabshan, who were neither real brothers nor was there any deal of birth-right between them. The story of sale or purchase of birth-right as given in the Bible depicts the worst type of fratricide having no similitude anywhere in the history of the world. As against this, the alleged incident between Abu Gabshan and Cosai is neither authentic nor accepted as a standard of morality even by the Arabs. No instance of cheating or deception by Cosai, even if true, can cover the alleged cruelty and callousness of Jacob meted out to his elder brother 2200 years before Cosai. We shall, therefore, discuss the irrelevance of the instance of Cosai and Gabshan with the deal between Jacob and Isaac in the following:

From various traditions of Arabia we learn that after the death of Ishmael, his sons retained the guardianship of Kaaba for some time, and thereafter it was taken over by Banu Jurham, the in-laws of Ishmael, who were the then ruling tribe of the region. Thereafter, Amaliq had a sway over Makkah, but eventually after a few centuries, Banu Jurham ousted them and remained as chiefs of Makkah for a long time. (*Rahmat-ul-Aalamin*, Qazi Muhammad Suleman Mansoorpuri, India, v. II, footnote p. 60). In about 207 AD, Amr bin Luhayy, from Banu Khuzaa came from Syria and after a long feud expelled Banu Jurham

from Makkah. About two centuries later, Hulail, one of the descendants of Amr bin Luhayy, became the chief of Makkah. During this period Cosai, the Qurayshite, returned from the northern areas and in about 440 AD entered Makkah. Cosai thereafter, further strengthened himself by gathering the scattered tribal units of Quraysh around him. According to the story, Hulail betrothed his daughter Hubba with Cosai and gave the authority to Abu Gabshan, his trusty and friend, to marry his daughter to Cosai. It is said that Abu Gabshan, due to certain reasons of his own, was delaying and avoiding the said marriage. Cosai prevailed over him by offering him a goat skin of wine, and succeeded to marry Hubba. In due course, he also succeeded to take over the control of Kaaba and the city from Banu Khuzaa. Anyhow, no authenticity can be attached to the said myth.

An alternative account tells us that when Cosai (Kussay) arrived in Mecca aiming at getting control of the city, he had to subdue the ruling Bakr bin Abd Manat of Kinana, the Khuzaa and their abettors, the Sufa.' (*The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden, E. J. Brill 1986, 'Khuzaa', p. 77). It is further stated that 'like the preceding rulers, he (Kussay) fought against the tribes of Bakr bin Abd Manat and Khuzaa and crushed their power. The relations between Kusayy on the one side and the Bakr bin Abd Manat and Khuzaa on the other were settled on the basis of the judgment of the arbiter Yamar b. Awf of the Bakr b. Abd Manat, called al-Shuddakh. The verdict granted Kusayy the custodianship of the Kaaba and provided that Khuzaa should be left in the area of The Haram.' (*ibid*, p. 78). The encyclopedia gives several other traditions about the origin of Banu Khuzaa, and none of the same proves them to be a line of the family of Quraish or even the Ishmaelites.

Whatever the truth in the afore-stated traditions, it is crystal clear that Cosai and Abu Gabshan were neither real brothers nor was there any question of sale or purchase of the right of the first born between them. There was also no question of passing the guardianship of temple from one line of the family to another. Cosai belonged to the Quraish

and Abu Gabshan to a rival tribe i.e. Banu Khuzaa, who were neither Ishmaelites nor Quraishites. Most of the traditions tell us that Banu Khuzaa were from Azd; who like Hamdan, Tae, Mazhaj, Kindah, Aaela, Juzam, Ashaar, and Lukhum were all descendants of Kahlan, the son of Saba. As such, they were Banu Qahtan, the Original Arabs, known as **Arab Al Aribah** whereas the Ishmaelites were new entrants in Arabia, called **Arab Al Mustaribah**. Besides this, *The Encyclopedia of Islam* has given a detailed account of the origin of Khuzaa, and out of several contradictory reports, it concludes that the **Khuzaa were 'an ancient Arab tribe of obscure origin'**. It narrates that there were protracted battles between Khuzaa and Banu Jurham but eventually, the Khuzaa defeated Jurham who had to leave the city. According to another tradition in the encyclopedia, 'Khuzaa' took over the control of Makkah from Iyad. It has given a detailed account of various traditions about the origin of Khuzaa and concludes that there are contradictory reports about the origin of Khuzaa.

In view of the above, by no stretch of imagination can one infer that the so called deal between Cosai and Abu Gabshan was made in 'precisely similar way', as it took place between Jacob and his real elder brother, Esau, between whom the former was a great prophet and both were the sons of Isaac, the prophet of God. On the other hand, we cannot absolve Jacob from the alleged crime of his cruel treatment towards his elder brother merely by tracing out some irrelevant incident in Arabia about 2200 years after the death of Jacob. The reference given by Dr. Dods is, therefore, an obvious and intentional perversion of the facts to excuse the alleged misconduct of Jacob by suggesting false kinship between Cosai (the Quraish) and Abu Gabshan of Bani Khuzaa. It is also inappropriate to justify the alleged immoralities, cruelties, or fratricide of Jacob by showing fake and false similitude in the myth pertaining to certain chiefs of Arab tribes, far removed in time, space and background from Jacob and Esau.

The dissimilarities in the incident of Jacob vs. Esau as compared with the feud between Cosai and Abu Gabshan, are obvious from the fact that the latter were neither prophets nor patriarchs. On the other hand, Jacob and Esau were both sons of Prophet Isaac and grandsons of Prophet Abraham. Jacob (Israel), the alleged malefactor, was himself a great prophet, the ancestor and father-in-faith of all the Israelites. His conduct cannot, therefore, be justified by referring to a distorted version of a story of the heads of two rival tribes of another nation, despised by the Israelites. Moreover, the incident of Abu Gabshan belongs to about 440 AD which was a morally degenerated period of the Quraish. As against this, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the patriarchs and fathers in faith who were supposed to be the role models for others. They lived in another land about 2200 years before Cosai and Abu Gabshan.

Only the approved traditions of a nation can be used as a precedence to justify similar traditions in their successive generations. Here we find Dr. Dods reversing the said order and also trying to seek an inadequate refuge behind an extremely doubtful incident dissimilar in characters, affinity, time, space, and the theme. **Instead of attempting to excuse the false allegations against Jacob as narrated in the Genesis, it would have been in the fitness of the things that Dr. Dods should have utilized his learning, sagacity and integrity to expunge from the Holy Book all the false and filthy stories as well as the remarks against the most venerable prophets like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** We, therefore, feel that Dr. Dod's effort to cover the ignominy of Jacob through creating a fake similitude anywhere else in the world is just an exercise in futility.

We also observe that the Jews as well as the Christians insist that the Ishmaelites lived in Paran in Sinai Peninsula, and they have always been denying their settlements at Makkah. They do so to uphold the assertion in Gen 21:20 and also to deny the advent of the promised Prophet in Paran i.e. Makkah Valley. In the instant case, however, Dr. Dods was obliged to concede that the Ishmael's line held

the guardianship of the temple at Makkah. He, perhaps, felt compelled to admit the same only to place an unfounded allegation against an ancestor of Prophet Muhammad (صلی الله علیہ وسلم).

Dr. Dod's suggestion that the guardianship of Makkah passed from one branch of the family to another, precisely in the way that Jacob deprived his elder brother from his birth-right, is factually, incorrect. Firstly, because Cosai and Abu Gabshan belonged to rival tribes, while the former was a Quraish, and the latter from Banu Khuzaa. Secondly, because there can be no justification on Earth to cover the alleged cruelty and fratricide of Prophet Jacob merely by pointing out a fake similarity elsewhere in the world. Factually, if Jacob happened to be a cheat and real cut-throat as the Genesis makes us believe, he could neither be chosen as a great prophet nor could he be an appropriate role model for his successors to imitate. We, therefore, feel that instead of trying to cover the misconduct of Jacob by showing its similitude elsewhere, it would have been in the fitness of the things that the learned scholars should have pointed out the incredibility of such assertions. The expositors, however, insist to prove the misconduct of the prophets as alleged in the Genesis to make the scripture true. Hence, after spoiling the luminous characters of the prophets, they come up with lame excuses to alleviate the misconduct.

The awkward apology offered by Dr. Dods actually reflects the embarrassment faced by the commentators and the expositors of the Bible to soften out the blemish against the prophets. Finding no adequate excuse, they resort to extravagant verbosity and irrelevant instances to turn the black into white or to convert the wickedness and moral turpitude into bounty and bliss. Such efforts, however, impair the honesty, integrity, and credibility of the expositors like our Dr. Dods referred to above.

Before moving further, it will be useful to examine the remarks of a Christian priest about Esau:

"His virtues are, we see, dangerously near being vices. Without self-control, without spiritual insight, without capacity even to know what spiritual issues were, judging things by immediate profit and material advantage, there was not in him depth of nature out of which really noble character could be cut. This damning lack of self-control comes out in the passage of our text, the transaction of the birthright. Coming from the hunt hungry and faint, he finds Jacob cooking porridge of lentils and asks for it. The sting of ungovernable appetite makes him feel as if he would die if he did not get it. Jacob takes advantage of his brother's appetite and offers to barter his dish of pottage for Esau's birthright. Esau was hungry, and before his fierce desire for food actually before him such a thing as a prospective right of birth seemed an ethereal thing of no real value". (The Expositors Dictionary of Text, p. 50, volume 1, London, Copyright 1910)

What a beautiful narrative has gone waste in an unsuccessful attempt to transfer the alleged misdeed from Jacob to Esau! Preceding to the passage quoted above, the priestly scholar i.e. J.C.M Bellew had described Esau as a typical sportsman, bold, frank and free, reckless indeed, and hot headed and passionate. He, however, found him lacking in prudence and dexterity as compared with Jacob's. Under his bias against Esau, the priest forgot that Esau was a strong hunter as well as the first born elder brother of Jacob. It was a joint family and Jacob neither had any exclusive right on the so called porridge nor could he dare refuse Esau, the awe-inspiring hunter and, perhaps, a fierce person as compared with Jacob who has been depicted mostly as a cheater, liar and timid person. He also forgot that being terrified from Esau, Jacob had to remain in exile for a long time surrendering practically even his own rights to Esau. Subsequently, when Jacob returned from Haran to Canaan, he presented himself and his family as slaves before Esau (Gen 27:41-45, 32:3-5,9-21, 33:3,10,11). In view of the above, how could the so-called deal deprive Esau of his birth right or make Jacob the sole inheritor of Isaac?.

Mr. Bellew also failed to recall that Esau and Jacob were putting up with their father and mother who were alive till then. Isaac, being the sole inheritor of Abraham, was a very rich man who had abundant means at his disposal. Obviously, there could be no dearth of food, milk, honey,

dates, meat or other eatables at the home of a rich and resourceful person like Isaac (Gen 26:13). Isaac must be having enough stores for his family and a large number of his servants and slaves. In the said circumstances, there was no danger of Esau's dying due to hunger at his own house. Alas! Instead of discarding the so-called deal about the birth right as an obvious fiction, the priest resorted to waste a lot of his talent and capabilities to divert the attention of his audience from the immorality of Jacob and incredibility of the narrative to the alleged shortcomings of Esau.

The Muslims, however, do not believe in the allegations placed against Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Had the patriarchs been such liars, cheaters, and immoral persons as the Genesis depicts them, then God would have punished them instead of blessing them and choosing them as the true prophets of God. They were, undoubtedly, the most righteous persons on Earth, and those who defamed them, as we find in the Genesis and elsewhere, earned the wrath of God and a curse from Him. The wrath and curse of God, therefore, prevailed over major part of 3,500 year history of Israel which is replete with repeated punishments of God inflicted on them. The Muslims earnestly desire that all fabricated allegations unworthy of the holiness of the prophets and the sanctity of the Book may be expunged from the text to make the Bible the Holy Writ in the real sense.

3. Falsehood, Cheating, and Misrepresentation win Blessings for Jacob

The entire chapter 27 of the Genesis deals with the deception of Jacob, depriving his elder brother Esau from the final blessings of his father Isaac. It tells us:

Isaac was now old, and had become blind. He sent for his elder son Esau and said to him ... You see that I am old and may die soon. Take your bow and arrows, go out into the country, and kill an animal for me. Cook me some of that tasty food that I like, and bring it to me. After I have eaten it, I will give you my final

blessing before I die. (Gen. 27:2-4 GNB)

Rebecca, the mother of Esau and Jacob, loved Jacob, her younger son more than Esau. She overheard the talk between Esau and Isaac and when Esau had gone out to hunt an animal, she prompted Jacob to bring two goats from the flock. She hurriedly prepared a tasty food and sent the same to Isaac. Jacob misrepresented himself as Esau and through his falsehood and deceitful act succeeded to receive the blessings of Isaac. Later on, when Esau returned and learnt about the incident, he said:

"This is the second time that he has cheated me. No wonder his name is Jacob. (Gen. 27:36)

We find in the footnotes that '**Jacob' sounds like the Hebrew "cheat".**' We are also told that Jacob had done every thing on the persuasion of his mother, Rebecca. It shows that our forefathers were such liars and swindlers, that they had no moral values at all. The writers of the Genesis have always upheld such nefarious acts and have given an impression as if such acts were appreciable achievements of the patriarchs, promoted and patronized by the Lord Himself.

As against the particular bent of mind of the Israelites, the Muslims do not believe that blessings can be deflected in such a manner. They, on the other hand, hold that liars who cheat their fathers and brothers deserve severe punishment from the Lord. The Lord God of the universe is well-aware of all our aims and deeds. As such, though it is plausible to think that Jacob might have succeeded to deceive and outwit his bed-ridden and blind father in the old age, yet it cannot be assumed that he could have succeeded to hoodwink even the Lord God through such means. Moreover, it is incompatible with the universal concept of God that he would have awarded blessings and a whole line of prophet-hood to the liars, cheaters, and debased persons and their descendants. In view of this, we cannot treat such a narrative as a statement of truth. Such assertions, therefore, seem to be obvious fabrications of later scribes of the Israelites to justify their own misdeeds by seeking a cover under the traditions of their ancestors.

We hold that Jacob received all the blessings from the Lord on the basis of his righteousness, obedience to the Lord and his parents, and complete submission to the will of God. In view of the above, we emphatically deny allegations against Abraham, Lot, Isaac and Jacob as well as all true prophets of the Lord.

4. Jacob and Laban

Another story tells us that after fleeing from Esau, Jacob had gone to Laban in Mesopotamia and there he married Laban's daughters Leah and Rachel. Reportedly, Jacob tricked his father-in-law to have more goats and sheep as detailed in Gen. 30:37-42. This act receives admiration of the writer who records that "**in this way Jacob became very wealthy. He had many flocks, slaves, camels, and donkeys.**" (Gen. 30:43 GNB). Subsequently, when Jacob asked his wives, Leah and Rachel, to go back to Canaan, they answered:

"There is nothing left for us to inherit from our father. (Gen. 31:14)

Jacob, thereafter, slipped away towards Canaan, taking along with him, his wives, children, and the animals without informing Laban, his father in law as narrated hereunder:

Laban had gone to shear his sheep and during his absence Rachel stole the household gods that belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban by not letting him know that he was leaving. (Gen. 31:19-20 GNB)

Laban, on return, pursued Jacob and got him at Gilead, but it is said that:

"In a dream that night, God came to Laban and said to him: Be careful, not to threaten Jacob in any way." (Gen. 31:24)

Being thus chilled, Laban meekly searched for the household gods but failed to find the same. Rachel had put the household gods in the saddle bags and was sitting on them. Without moving from the saddle bags, she said to her father:

Do not be angry with me sir. But I am not able to stand up in

your presence. I am having my monthly periods. Laban searched but did not find his household gods. (Gen. 31:35)

Thus, through falsehood, deception, and shameful excuse, Rachel succeeded in retaining her loot.

Look! how convenient it has been for the writer of the Genesis to keep God at hand to cow down Laban by arranging His active participation in sinister motives of Jacob and Rachel, only to protect unlawful material gains of the family. Is it not surprising for us to note that God readily lent a helping hand in all the immoralities of the patriarchs, but He never admonished them to be truthful, righteous and just?

It is also surprising for us to observe that Jacob, a great prophet of God, did not preach the worship of one and the only God of the universe to his father-in-law and his family. He also did not resent Rachel's theft as well as her fondness for the household gods which a prophet could not have tolerated at his abode. Subsequently, it was at the age of about a hundred and twenty years that while moving from Schechem to Bethel, Jacob said:-

2. So Jacob said to his family and to all who were with him, "**Get rid of the foreign gods that you have; purify yourselves and put on clean clothes.** 3. We are going to leave here and go to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who helped me in the time of my trouble and who has been with me everywhere I have gone." 4. So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods that they had and also the earrings that they were wearing. He buried them beneath the oak tree near Shechem. (Gen 35:2-4 GNB)

The Genesis, therefore, depicts Jacob and his family worshiping idols till Jacob had crossed the age of 120 years. He and his family, therefore, hardly had any time to be monotheist worshiping the God of Isaac and Abraham. Queerly enough, **we do not find any teachings of faith and morality from Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Tales about them teach only the techniques of fraud, deception, falsehood and immodesty to gain wealth.**

As usual, God, instead of admonishing Rachel and Jacob for stealing the household gods of Laban, sided with Jacob. He warned Laban not to threaten Jacob. This shows that the

Lord has also been taking care of the worldly benefits of the Israelites even though it was against His own law and the commandments. No wonder that the Israelites always felt free to follow the conduct of the patriarchs as depicted in the Genesis.

5. Jealousy; the Dominating Sentiment Money; the Main Consideration

The writers of the Genesis tell us that Joseph's brothers:

Sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. (Gen. 37:28)

This shows that 20 pieces of silver were more valuable for the brothers than Joseph himself, and monetary considerations always prevailed over the moral ones.

Greediness, deception, cruelty, immodesty, Jealousy and fratricide had always been the main pursuits in the lives of the Israelites. All the 10 brothers of Joseph took him along with them to the jungle deceiving their old father. Out of jealousy, they first tried to kill him but greediness prevailed. They, therefore, sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites who took Joseph to Egypt. The brothers of Joseph returned home falsely wailing over his death and again told lies to their father. No wonder, none of Joseph's brothers was blessed by the Lord to be chosen as a prophet.

The examples, quoted above, contain very serious allegations such as falsehood, deception, immodesty, greediness, and idolatry against the patriarchs. Jealousy among co-wives and brothers prevailed over all other values of life. We note that many narrations in the Genesis as well as in the Old Testament tarnish the image of the great prophets of God and ancestors of the people of Book. In spite of the fact that we know nothing about the composers, their sources and the time of the composition, yet our Jewish and Christian brethren insist that the same are the Word of God and must be accepted as true. Now, if we believe these assertions, then we find that the

patriarchs, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had greedy, dubious, fallacious, and shameless characters. They were extremely selfish and frequently resorted to jealousy and falsehood to attain or retain material benefits even at the cost of their own fathers, brothers, wives, and sons. If these narrations are true, then the writers of the Genesis, being the followers in faith and being the descendants of the aforesaid patriarchs, must perforce inherit or adopt the qualities and characters of their forefathers. **If Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons told lies for the attainment of blessings or other material benefits what will hold back the writers of the Genesis from any falsehood, insertion, or distortion in the text of the Bible?** All such narrations aiming at establishing the superiority of Israel over others may, therefore, be counted as a self service of Israel and the same cannot be relied upon. **Keeping in view the background of Jacob's depriving Esau from the blessings through falsehood, deception and hoodwinking Isaac, his father, the interpolation of the name of Isaac in Gen 22:2 is a minor offence of the composers of the Genesis for which they need not be ashamed.**

THE NARRATIVE OF SACRIFICE

After discussing certain peculiarities and priorities of the Israelites in the preceding chapter, we shall now proceed to analyze the narrative of the sacrifice in the Genesis in a critical manner to evaluate the substance and credibility thereof. For an elaborate examination of the narrative, we reproduce the same as under:

1 And it came to pass after these things that **God did tempt Abraham**, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, **Behold, here I am.**

2 And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah;** and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and **saddled his**

ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, **and clave the wood** for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and **I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.**

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, **and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand**, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb for a burnt offering?**

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, **and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.**

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him **a ram caught in a thicket by his horns:** and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that **place Jehovahjireh:** as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will

multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; **and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba**". (Gen. 22:3-19 KJV)

THE COMMANDMENTS OF SACRIFICE ANALYZED

For proper evaluation of the narrative of sacrifice as in the Genesis quoted above, we shall try to analyze various verses of the same to find out as to whether it is a statement of facts or a mere fabrication conflicting within its narrative without any corroborative evidence from the Scripture, history, circumstances or sound reasoning to uphold the same. If it is a true depiction of facts, it should not be vulnerable to any critical examination whatsoever. For critical appraisal of the narrative, therefore, we analyze narrative by parts as under:-

Verse 1 tells us:

"God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, **here I am**".

Firstly, we note that the word 'tempt' means to induce or to incite someone to do a wrong or a forbidden thing. As for the Almighty, He may test or try His slaves but it is only Satan who tempts them.....

Secondly, we observe that God addressed Abraham directly by calling his name to which he replied 'behold, here I am.'

Again we find in verse 11 that God called out to Abraham and said:

"Abraham, Abraham, and he said: **here am I**".

In the above verses, the words 'Behold, here I am' or 'here am I', in response to direct call of God to Abraham by

name, are exactly equivalent to the Arabic word (لبيك) "Labbaik", and the full response to God's call is (لبيك اللهم لبيك) meaning "I respond to Your call O Allah, I respond to Your call." We also find that, **in commemoration of the said words of Abraham, the pilgrims to Makkah recite the same words loudly, starting from anywhere in the world while proceeding to the Umra or Hajj.** From the day of Ishmael's sacrifice, the practice is continuing without any break till today. During the Hajj season, one can find the Muslim pilgrims on almost all the airports of the world and other terminals chanting the same words again and again. This can also be viewed on the media throughout the world. This shows that the ritual pertains to the Muslims alone, and only they are keeping the tradition of Abraham and Ishmael alive till today. The Israelites never repeated such words in commemoration of the sacrifice made by Abraham which shows that the sacrifice did not pertain to Isaac because the Israelites had no concern with the same.

It is also noteworthy that verse 1 and verse 11 of Gen 22 are the only places in the Old Testament where God called any prophet directly by his name three times; and the prophet directly responded to the call of God by saying 'Here I am my Lord' i.e. 'Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik' (لبيك اللهم لبيك). The tribesmen of Arabia, since the time of Abraham, always kept the tradition of Abraham alive by responding to God in the same words, and after the advent of Islam, the full response as taught by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is as under:

لَبِيكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبِيكَ، لَبِيكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَبِيكَ، أَنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ

لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

"I respond to Your call O Allah, I respond to Your call, and I am obedient to Your orders. You have no partners, I respond to Your call, All the praises and blessings are for You, All the sovereignty is for You, And You have no partners with You".

We said earlier that it was Ishmael who was actually offered for sacrifice at Makkah. The composers of the

Genesis seem to have written the account of the said sacrifice just on the basis of some verbal transmission through Arab merchants visiting Canaan occasionally with their merchandise. Such writers lacked first-hand information about the far distant events and they, therefore, recorded the same on the basis of legend and lore by filling the gaps with their own imagination. A close examination will reveal that the story belonged to Ishmael but later on, perhaps, during the post exilic period, the name of Isaac was inserted in verse 2 of Gen. 22 in place of Ishmael. The detailed Analysis will prove our point for which we proceed further to analyze **verse 2** as under:

Verse 2

"And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah;** and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of". (Gen. 22: 2 KJV)

The verse quoted above contains five important phrases as detailed below:

Thine only son

Whom thou lovest

Land of Moriah

Offer him there for a Burnt Offering

One of the mountains which I will tell thee of

We shall examine the same as under:

A) Thine Only Son:

This term has vital importance to identify the person subjected to the sacrifice. The crucial significance of the term is evident from the fact that it has been stressed again in verses 12 and 16 of Gen. 22. The said emphasis on 'thine only son' leaves no doubt that the son offered for sacrifice was Ishmael, and not Isaac.

According to the Genesis, Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old (Gen. 16:15-16) whereas Isaac was born 14 years later when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen.

21:5). Ishmael was, therefore, the only son of Abraham for 14 years before the birth of Isaac who was the second son of Abraham. **As regards Isaac, he had never been the only or the first born son of Abraham. The commandment of sacrifice did not apply to him.** The name of Isaac after 'thine only son' was, therefore, a spurious insertion in the text.

Some Jewish as well as Christian scholars and expositors of the Bible have tried to create differentiation between Isaac and Ishmael on the ground that the former was the only legitimate and genuine son of Abraham because he was born of his wife Sarai while the latter was born of a slave girl. We may point out that such **a differentiation on the basis of mothers was nowhere found from Adam to Jacob.** The genealogies mentioned only the name of fathers and their sons without referring to their wives. In case of Lamech, however, we are told that he had two wives i.e. Adda and Zilla (Gen. 4:19). Anyhow, there is nothing to create any differentiation between his sons on the basis of his wives. After Adda and Zilla, the first name of any woman mentioned in the OT was Sarai, the wife of Abraham. The Israelites did this only to distinguish themselves from the Ishmaelites. By distortion in the Genesis, they dubbed Hagar (the princess of Egypt) as a slave girl to assert falsely that the Israelites were the only genuine descendants of Abraham. God has, however, always nullified their boastful claims which are manifest in the history of Israel as compared with the history of the Ishmaelites. About the primacy as well as the legitimacy of Ishmael, therefore, we need to have a fresh look on the Genesis.

The Genesis tells us that while at Haran, Abraham was childless at the age of 75 and Sarai was barren at about 65 years. Obviously, they were desperately longing for children without any hope. At this critical juncture, God commanded Abraham to go to another land (i.e. Canaan) assuring him that he would get innumerable descendants there who would hold the entire land of Canaan forever.

This kindled the light of hope in the family and they left for Canaan and wandered there from place to place for another 8 or 9 years. It was a famine that took Abraham and his wife from Canaan to Egypt where something dubious and shameful has been narrated by the Genesis (Gen. 12:10-20). The Muslims, however, maintain that Abraham went there only to preach his faith in One and the Only Lord God of the universe. The king, due to his own priorities and belief, declined the call, but being impressed by the faith, personality, and nobility of the aged "Sheikh", he treated him well and besides other gifts, also gave his daughter Hagar to serve the Sheikh. Abraham took Hagar as a bounty from the Lord and being childless, married her in the hope to get the descendants, promised to him. Perhaps, a year after the marriage, the promise of the Lord was fulfilled in the shape of a child, the first-born of Abraham, and he named him Ishmael which means, "God hears" or "God has heard", as we find in the verse hereunder:

"And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael". (Gen. 16:15 KJV)

The very name 'Ishmael' has an in-knit evidence that he was the response of the Almighty God to the age-long prayers of Abraham. Ishmael was, therefore, the Son of Promise. Abraham himself named him Ishmael as an immutable certificate that God had heard his prayers by granting him the son promised to him. It is pertinent to note here that the Promised Son was destined to be born from Hagar. Abraham had, perhaps, gone to Egypt with the divine purpose of marrying Hagar there. We know that Sarah did not get any offspring at Haran, Canaan or Egypt. Even subsequently, she did not beget Isaac till Ishmael was offered for the sacrifice. When Abraham and Ishmael submitted to the commandment of the Lord to offer Ishmael, the same was accepted by the Lord graciously. The Lord was pleased with them and amply rewarded Abraham with Isaac and his descendants while he promised 12 princes as descendants of Ishmael. As such, Isaac could be eligible for the sacrifice only if he had been the first born of Abraham. It was only Ishmael who being the first born of

Abraham belonged to the Lord and stood dedicated to Him. He was the son of promise, born in response to the prayers of Abraham and named Ishmael in accordance with the commandment of the Lord. Those who try to make Isaac the only son or describe him to be the only legitimate son of Abraham, they mischievously stand in the camp opposing the will and the act of God. They must not ignore the fact that it was God who made Ishmael the first born son of Abraham besides suggesting the aforesaid name for him.

Verse 15 of the Gen. 16, as quoted above, starts with the words "and Hagar bare Abram a son" which signifies **patriarchal ownership prevailing during those times. Ishmael was, therefore, primarily the son of Abraham**, while Hagar had secondary claim on him. We also observe that aside from the children, "a woman in that culture would not receive or hold property" (Discovering Genesis, Guideposts Associates Inc, New York, 1987, page 154). As such, Ishmael was by all means, the first born, the legitimate as well as the only Son of Promise till the time Abraham offered him as a sacrifice. Isaac was the son of laughter or the son of glad tidings received as a reward for unconditional submission of Abraham to the will of God by sacrificing Ishmael who was the only son of Abraham till that time. As such, even the expositors cannot challenge the legitimacy or the right of first born son of Abraham (i.e. Ishmael) who only was the son of promise as recorded repeatedly by the Bible and endorsed by God Himself. Following verses confirm the same.

"And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael". (Gen. 16:15 KJV)

Subsequent to the covenant of circumcision with God, the Genesis records that:

"And **Abraham took Ishmael his son**, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was

circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. **25.** And **Ishmael his son** was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin **26.** In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. **27.** And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him". (Gen. 17:23-27 KJV)

Ishmael had, therefore, been the only son of Abraham to participate in the covenant of circumcision while Isaac having been born a year after the covenant had no chance to participate in the same.

In spite of certain obvious distortions in the text describing the alleged casting out of Ishmael from the family, we find the following assertions affirming his sonship from Abraham:

"And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of **his son**". (Gen. 21:11 KJV)

God also said to Abraham:

"And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because **he is thy seed**". (Gen. 21:13 KJV)

"And **God was with the lad**; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer". (Gen. 21:20 KJV)

We, therefore, find the Lord confirming Ishmael as the son of Abraham at 5 different places in the Genesis. Besides this, God also affirmed that Ishmael was the seed of Abraham. It, therefore, transpires from the above that efforts to create differentiation between Isaac and Ishmael by referring them to their mothers, instead of Abraham, is a mischievous and wicked attempt of certain scribes of Israel aiming at self-assumed superiority of the Israelites over the Ishmaelites ignoring the afore-stated narrative of the Genesis. They, therefore, earned the wrath of God as we find recorded in the OT as well as in the Qur'an.

The differentiation on account of mothers is without any substance and has no support in the early history of the Patriarchs. The sons of Jacob from his slave wife Bilhah (i.e. Dan and Napthali) and the sons of Zilpha (i.e. Gad and Asher) have always been treated equally with other sons of Jacob, and the land of Palestine was also subdivided between their descendants in parity with others. Even the

12 gates of Jerusalem were named after each of the sons of Jacob which included 4 gates named after Dan, Napthali, Gad, and Asher, the sons of slave wives of Jacob. Nowhere in the Old Testament, we find them denounced as slaves or born of slave women. This nullifies the baseless differentiation created by some commentators on the Bible to establish superiority of Isaac over Ishmael which has no support except self-created perversion in the meanings of the narrative.

Isaac had undoubtedly been the only son of Sarai, but never had he been the only son of Abraham. The commandment of God demanded the sacrifice of the only son of Abraham. Sarai never received any command to offer her first-born and her only son Isaac. The insertion 'Isaac' in Gen. 22:2 is, therefore, a mischievous addition in the text but the same stands repudiated by the rest of the text, by law, by historical facts on record as well as by the traditions and practices inherited by the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael.

B) Whom Thou Lovest:

The Jews and the Christians make Isaac the legitimate and the beloved son of Abraham. They have also labeled Ishmael as a pariah or the outcast. There is, however, ample evidence to prove that Ishmael was the only and the beloved son of Abraham till the sacrifice and even thereafter, throughout the life of Abraham. Ishmael was, in fact, the answer to the age-long prayers of Abraham and, as such, the Son of Promise who revived the hopes of life in the family. Being the first-born, he belonged to God and was taken to Kaaba along with his mother since his suckling period. Even this was a test for Abraham to separate his beloved wife and the only son from him on the commandment of God. The final great test of Abraham's life was the commandment to sacrifice Ishmael, his only son whom he begot in the very old age, and had no other hopes especially when even Hagar had not born any son after Ishmael and Sarah was barren till then.

As discussed earlier, Ishmael was the first fruit of the bowels of Abraham and main solace to him, to Sarah and to Hagar. Abraham never prayed for another son and he was fully contented with Ishmael, the first-born who was sent to Kaaba, being dedicated to the Lord. Thus, when God gave Abraham a glad tiding of a son also from Sarah, it is written that:

"Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, **O that Ishmael might live before thee!**" (Gen. 17:17-18 KJV)

The perusal of these verses betrays that it was a surprise to Abraham to receive the tidings of a son also from Sarah who was neither promised for a son nor was Abraham expecting the same. Abraham was fully contented with Ishmael and revealed his entire satisfaction by naming him Ishmael, meaning that God had heard and responded to his prayers. **Thus, no one else, except Ishmael, was the Son of Promise.**

The second part of the verse Gen 17:18 i.e. '*O that Ishmael might live before thee!*' discloses three things. First, that it was a surprise for Abraham to have another son as he neither expected nor prayed for him. Second, that **Ishmael was already living before the God** and he was not putting up with Abraham and Sarah. Third, that the good news had the inkling that God might demand the sacrifice of Ishmael who was already dedicated to Him. Abraham, therefore, abruptly expressed his concern by saying:-

"O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

This shows the natural anxiety of Abraham expressed extemporaneously about his beloved son, Ishmael. The news about the birth of another son at the cost of the first one was not, therefore, entertained by him. **This proves that it was Ishmael whom Abraham loved the most.**

It will not be out of place to mention here that when Abraham submitted himself to the will of God unconditionally, his sacrifice was accepted graciously by the

Lord who provided a lamb in place of Ishmael. Commemoration of the great event, an everlasting tradition of sacrifice, was left in the descendants of Ishmael and subsequently, in the Muslims throughout the world. God, therefore, blessed Abraham with Isaac and his descendants, and also blessed Ishmael with the 12 princes and their descendants. Abraham's descendants through Isaac possessed the areas of Canaan and its surroundings for many centuries while a long line of great prophets also descended from them. The Ishmaelites, on the other hand had an uninterrupted rule over the entire Arabian sub-continent, for more than 2000 years after Abraham. After the advent of Islam, they ruled over half of the civilized world for about 1,300 years. The last and the greatest prophet of God i.e. Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) was the descendant of Abraham through Ishmael who was given the Quran being the final covenant and guidance to the entire humanity forever. The immutable contents of Al-Quran continue not only to provide the perfect guidance for worship of the Lord but also for creation of an ideal and perfect human society in the world. The entire social justice and human relations in the world emanate from the same source. This is how the Almighty God rewarded and blessed Abraham for his absolute submission to the will of God.

C) Land of Moriah:

The third most important phrase in Gen 22:2 regarding the sacrifice is the Land of Moriah being the suggested venue of the sacrifice. It is, therefore, necessary to locate the same. The Bible does not mention any land of Moriah after the solitary reference in Gen. 22:2. History as well as the literature of Israel intervening the time of Abraham and Jesus also does not provide any clue to locate the land of Moriah. Anyhow, instead of the land of Moriah, we find one "Mount Moriah" in the following verse:

"Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite". (2 Ch. 3:1 KJV)

We observe that the said Mount Moriah cannot be taken as the land of Moriah. The Lord had specifically directed Abraham to get into the land of Moriah where Abraham was required to sacrifice his son on one of the mountains, the Lord would tell him. As regards 2Ch. 3:1, the term 'Moriah' does not identify the Land. It is, obviously, a name of a mount suggested by the Chronicler in his eagerness to identify the temple hill as the venue of the sacrifice of Isaac. Anyhow, Moriah in 2Ch 3:1 can easily be identified as an irrelevant interpolation in the text. Most probably, "Mount Moriah" has been inserted there during the post-exilic period by some pious composer or scribe of the Old Testament to substantiate the assertion of the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22:1-19. Even this attempt fails to prove that Isaac was sacrificed at the temple hill or David had selected the site for the temple in consideration of the sacrifice of Isaac there.

The verse under reference actually pertains to the construction of the temple at the threshing-floor of Ornan or Araunah, the Jebusite at Jerusalem. Had this been the site suggested for the sacrifice, then instead of commanding Abraham to go to the land of Moriah, God would have told him to go to Mount Moriah at Salem because Abraham already knew the place. We know that on triumphant return of Abraham after defeating four kings, Melchizedek, king of Salem had gone out of Salem to greet him. Melchizedek also blessed him besides presenting bread and wine to Abraham (Gen 14:18). Abraham, too, responded to the greetings by offering Melchizedek one tenth of the loot (Gen 14:20). As against the city of Salem, 'the land of Moriah' suggests some distant land outside Canaan. The said implication is evident from a simile of the term 'land' already used in the Genesis as quoted below:-

"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 said commandment, therefore, took Abraham out of his country to Canaan which was about 700 km from Haran.

The present commandment also meant a place outside Canaan which was about 1350 km from Beersheba. It was the first House of The Lord and Mount Marwah is at about 300 yards from Kaaba at Makkah being the ancient and the most famous place of sacrifice in the Arabian Peninsula since the sacrifice of Ishmael there.

Actually 2Ch 3:1 refers to the construction of altar by David and subsequently, the construction of temple by Solomon there. Aside from 2-Ch 3:1, there is full narrative of the said episode firstly in chapter 24 of 2-Samuel and subsequently in 1-Ch. 21. We reproduce the relevant verses as under:

"And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (2-Sam. 24:18 KJV)

"And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, **that the plague may be stayed from the people**". (2-Sam. 24:21 KJV)

"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So **David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver**". (2-Sam. 24:24 KJV)

Further we read in the Chronicles as under:

"Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. (1-Ch. 21:18 KJV)

Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the **plague may be stayed from the people**". (1-Ch. 21:22 KJV)

"So David gave to Ornan for the place **six hundred shekels of gold** by weight". (1-Ch. 21:25 KJV)

The verses recorded above and the perusal of the relevant chapters detailing constructions of the altar and subsequently the temple, **do not reveal that the site was known as Mount Moriah or the same was the site of the sacrifice of Isaac**. There is no reference that either

the altar or the temple was constructed at the site of the altar of the sacrifice of Isaac. The sole **purpose of the construction of the altar by David was to stop the epidemic on Israel** in which 70,000 Israelites died (2Ch 24:21b). **He did not do so to commemorate the sacrifice of Isaac.** It is also significant to note that, in spite of Araunah's offer to give the threshing place free of cost, David paid him full price i.e. **50 shekels of silver** (2Sam. 24:24) or **600 shekels of gold** as we find in 1Ch 21:25. Ignoring for the moment, the inconsistencies in the prices paid, we understand that the altar was not built there before paying the full price of the threshing place. Similarly, we cannot imagine that Abraham could have built an altar there for the sacrifice of his son Isaac without purchasing the place of the sacrifice from the owners of the same. Such a great feat of oblation without permission or ownership of the site would make the very act of the great sacrifice as sacrilegious. The act of sacrifice of the first born of Abraham had such a sanctifying grace that the place of altar should have become a sanctuary for the Israelites just from the moment of the sacrifice. Since it continued to be deserted or used as an orchard and threshing place by Araunah upto the time of David's reign, it shows that the said place had no link with Abraham or Isaac. We also know that David acquired the threshing place by paying for the same. Similarly, Abraham, too, did not accept the land and the cave of Machpelah free of cost, and before burying Sarah there, he paid full price i.e. 400 pieces of silver to the Hittites (Gen 23:16). There was, therefore, no justification in building an altar for the sacrifice of Isaac at the land owned by others, without purchasing or seeking prior permission of the owners of the same.

In fact, the said sacrifice was made at the only House of the Lord at Makkah being the most suitable place for the same. Ever since raising the walls of Kaaba by Abraham and Ishmael and especially with effect from the sacrifice of Ishmael there, it became sanctuary for the Arabs retaining its position as the central place of worship for the true followers of Abraham. Mount Marwah (now a part of the Holy Mosque of Makkah) had been the ancient site of the

sacrifice and billions of goats, sheep, cows, and the camels have been sacrificed at Makkah during the last 3,800 years in commemoration of the sacrifice of Ishmael there, and the same is likely to continue forever. Since then Hajj and sacrifice always remained the greatest festival in Arabia, and after the advent of Islam, it continues to be the greatest festival of the Muslims throughout the world. The sacrifice at Makkah did not pertain to Isaac, that is why, it was not commemorated even once in the whole history of Israel. Further, we know that Isaac lived for about 170 years after the so-called sacrifice. Subsequently, Jacob as well as Esau stayed in Canaan for a time exceeding about 100 years each but they never talked about it nor did they make any sacrifice in memory of the oblation of Isaac. Similarly, no one among the prophets of Israel ever referred to the site of the sacrifice. This is a clear-cut proof of the fact that Esau, Jacob, and their descendants had no knowledge of any sacrifice made in Canaan. Even the commentators of the Bible had no option except to admit that the land of Moriah could not be located so far. For ready reference, we quote:

"Land of Moriah is an unknown locality. Later Jewish tradition identified it with the Temple Hill in Jerusalem". (2 Ch. 3:1). (*A New Commentary on Holy Scripture* by Charles Gore etc. London 1928, page 54)

Peake's Commentary says:

"Jerusalem may be intended (2 Ch. 3:1) but it could hardly have stood in the original text. **There was no "Land of Moriah" and "Moriah" was not commonly used for the temple hill.** Nor would it be like to represent Abraham as coming to the capital of the S. kingdom. Jerusalem was an inhabited city, here apparently we have to do with a lonely spot. The original text may have been "**the land of the Amorites**" (Syr.). Moriah would be substituted because it seemed to contain the same elements as the name "Yahweh yireh". (Peake's Commentary, page154)

Peake has clearly pointed out that the words "Mount Mariah" could hardly have stood in the original text. He emphatically denies that there had been any "Land of Moriah" or "Mount Moriah" was commonly used for the

temple hill. It may also be noted that 2-Ch. 3:1 written probably 1300 to 1500 years after the event, is nothing but another forgery to cover the first one committed by replacing the name of Ishmael with Isaac in Gen. 22:2. Since the text of the Genesis contradicts the same, therefore, we conclude that **neither Isaac was offered for sacrifice nor did the sacrifice take place at Jerusalem.**

D) Offer him there for a Burnt Offering:

It is pertinent to note here that human sacrifice has always been an act of abomination for the Lord and He never ordered for the same. As regards the burnt offering, the same has been mostly the tradition of the pagans and there is no authentication that God ever commanded for the same specifically. The story of Cain and Abel contained only the sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock of Abel which were accepted by the Lord and there is no mention of the burnt offering therein (Gen 4:4-5). Again we find in the following verses of the Genesis:

[20] "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. [21] And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the **LORD said in his heart**, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done". (Gen 8:21-22 KJV)

The above verses do not show that God commanded Noah for the burnt offering. It was due to his own freewill that he did so. One also finds that instead of a revelation, this part of story reflects imaginative descriptions of the writers of the Genesis thousands of years after Noah. **The writer claims to know as to what was in the heart of the Lord, and also shows Him pleased with the sweet savour of the burnt offering. God also, perhaps, realizes His mistake and has remorse over destroying the people of Noah. God repents on His previous act** and vows not to repeat the same in future (Gen 8:20-21). Such a description reflects only human perception of the episode and cannot be taken as revelation from the Lord.

As against the above, we find a clear-cut commandment from the Lord to Moses as under:

"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee". (Ex 20:24 KJV)

The above verse stresses more on making the altar for sacrifices and other offerings. It explains the purpose of the altar and does not stress that the sacrifices must always be made as burnt offerings. Anyhow, since Israelites were a stubborn nation and rebelling against the Lord again and again, God had issued certain orders only to punish them for the same. God, therefore, forbade them even from certain clean things which were otherwise permissible to the ancestors of the Old, and also permissible for the Muslims. This is evident from the following verse of the Qur'an where God says that:

فِيظُلِّمُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ حَاكُوا حَرَمَنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أَحْلَاثٌ لَهُمْ وَبَصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَفِيرًا

"For the iniquity of the Jews We made unlawful for them certain (foods) good and wholesome which had been lawful for them; - in that they hindered many from Allah's Way;" - Al-Qur'an, 004.160 (An-Nisa [Women])

We also know that God derives no benefit from the flesh or the blood of the sacrifice. Similarly, no savour of the burnt offering can please Him. All that He requires from the humanity is a wholehearted submission to the will of the Lord in all walks of life. God says:

لَئِنْ يَعْمَلَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَتَأْلُمُ التَّغْوَى مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخْرَهَا
لَكُمْ لِشَكِّرِيَّةِ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَا هَذَا كُمْ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His Guidance to you and proclaim the good news to all who do right". (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Hajj] 22:37)

The burnt sacrifice was, therefore, adopted by the Israelites of their own without any commandment from the Lord. Prophet Jeremiah has clarified the point as under:

21 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. 22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: 23 But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you". (Jer 7:21-23 KJV)

The GNB renders verse 21 to 23 in the following manner:

Jer 7:21 "My people, some sacrifices you burn completely on the altar, and some you are permitted to eat. But what I, the LORD, say is that you might as well eat them all. Jer 7:22 **I gave your ancestors no commands about burnt offerings or any other kinds of sacrifices when I brought them out of Egypt.** Jer 7:23 But I did command them to obey me, so that I would be their God and they would be my people. And I told them to live the way I had commanded them, so that things would go well for them. (Jer 7:21-23 GNB)

The verse 7:22 as quoted above contradicts Gen. 22:2 which commanded that:

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. (Gen 22:2 KJV).

Both the assertions have been preserved in the Bible without any explanation to resolve the contradiction between them. It is, however, from the Qur'an that we find the solution. Instead of receiving any specific commandment from the Lord, Abraham had the vision that he was sacrificing his son (Al-Qur'an 37:102) who happened to be not only the first born of Abraham but also his only son till then. Taking the vision as commandment of the Lord, Abraham had laid Ishmael prostrate on his forehead when the Almighty called him that he had already fulfilled the vision. God, therefore, ransomed the victim with a momentous sacrifice. **The vision, however, had no reference to the burnt offering of the son.** The event

had such great importance in the lives of the followers of Abraham at Makkah that they started commemorating it as Hajj day for all times thereafter. The fulfillment of the vision by Abraham had earned great blessings of the Lord as affirmed in the following

"And we left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times" (Al-Qur'an 37:108).

Hence, the followers of Abraham had been commemorating this bounty of the Lord on 9th of Dhulhajj every year for more than 3900 years from the time of Abraham. The tradition is likely to endure with ever increasing fervor till the end of all times. Muslims offer millions of camels, cattle, sheep and goats at Makkah and almost all parts of the world which can be taken as an irrefutable proof that the tradition of sacrifice had originated from Ishmael and not from Isaac.

Marwah and Not Moriah the Original Place of Sacrifice:

Although Genesis 22:2 had mentioned land of Moriah as the place of sacrifice yet Biblical scholars fail to identify any place with that name. It seems that the compilers of the Genesis neither knew anything about the place of sacrifice nor had they seen it. Through verbal reports, however, they might have heard about Mt. Marwah which they changed into Moriah as we find in the Genesis today. Abraham, therefore, attempted to sacrifice Ishmael at Mt. Marwah facing towards Ka'aba about 350 meters in the south. Mt. Marwah is towards north of Ka'aba.

E) One of the Mountains Which I Will Tell Thee Of:

This clearly shows that the sacrifice was to be made at a place where there would have been so many mountains and one of the same was meant for the sacrifice. Continuous and unbroken Arabian and the Muslim traditions for the last 3,800 years tell us that **Abraham offered Ishmael for sacrifice before the House of the Lord at Makkah, at Mount Marwah near Kaaba**. A tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also confirms that

Marwah had been the original site of the sacrifice. With the increase in the number of sacrifices, subsequently, the venue was shifted to Minaa, about 3 KM from Kaaba, and all the sacrifices at Makkah are made there. The tradition is as under:

حدثني يحيى عن مالك، انه بلغه: ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: مني
هذا المنحر وكل مني منحر [وقال في العبرة] هنا المنحر يعني المروءة [وكل
فجاج مكة وطرقها منحر].

Yahya related to me from Malik that he had heard that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said once at Mina, "This place (where I have just sacrificed), and the whole of Mina, is a place of sacrifice," and he said once during Umrah, "This place of sacrifice" meaning Marwa, "and all the pathways of Makkah and its roads are a place of sacrifice."⁹

It transpires from the above that the episode of sacrifice did not belong to Isaac or the Israelites. They only had a vague notion of the same from some folklore prevailing in Israel and they, perhaps, originally described the same in the name of Ishmael. The narrative of the sacrifice itself exposes an imaginary description having no accurate information of the episode. It was, perhaps, during the post-exilic period that the name of Ishmael was replaced with Isaac to provide artificial moral and spiritual elevation to the Jews. A routine difference in the accent changed the Arabic pronunciation of 'Marwah' to 'Moriah' in the Hebrew. Anyhow, the main importance must always be attached to unbroken continuity of the tradition, a clear identification of the actual sites and full detail of rituals performed as well as the history of the region received from generation to generation till today. A mere replacement of the name of Ishmael with Isaac cannot change the course of history nor can it lend any sanctity or blessing to the false claimants of such an epitome of faith. Perhaps, the best way to receive blessings on account of the sacrifice made by Abraham was to follow his tradition and commemorate the same by

⁹ *Muwatta Imam Malik: Kitab Al-Hajj 'Sacrificing Animal During Hajj'* Book 20, Number 20.56.187.

making sacrifices to God. The Arabs, therefore, started commemorating the same since the time of Abraham while there is no mention of the same throughout the history of Israel. Since the advent of Islam, all the Muslims in the world offer their sacrifices on the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah, following the tradition of Abraham. The Israelites, on the other hand, did not sacrifice a single goat to remember the so-called sacrifice of Isaac.

Nations of the world always follow their own traditions while the traditions of others are not adopted by them. In spite of their claim, the Israelites, too, failed to adopt the tradition of the sacrifice due to the fact that it belonged to the Ishmaelites. The wide spread continuity of the sacrifice in the Arabs since the time of Ishmael till date and the entire absence thereof in the Israelites is a conclusive proof that the sacrifice did not pertain to Isaac as asserted in the Gen. 22:2 which is most probably an insertion of a later date.

Verse 3

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and **saddled his ass**, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and **clave the wood** for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto **the place of which God had told him**". (Gen 22:3 KJV)

Three phrases in the aforesaid verse, shown in bold letters above, need our special attention.

Saddled his ass
 Clave the wood for the burnt offering
 The place of which God had told him

- i) Only one Ass for the Journey?

We learnt earlier that because of Sarah, the King of Egypt had given Abraham flocks of sheep and goats, cattle, donkeys, slaves and camels (Gen. 12:16). As such, "Abram was a very rich man, with sheep, goats and cattle as well as silver and gold" (Gen 13:2). Subsequently, Abimelech also gave sheep, cattle, slaves and a thousand pieces of gold to Abraham (Gen. 20:14 and 16). Even prior to that Abraham had 318 fighting men with whom he defeated four

kings including Chedorloamer, King of Elam (Gen. 14:17), Amraphel, King of Babylonia (Gen 14:1,16-17)). He defeated and slaughtered the aforesaid kings after chasing them from Sodom to Hobah, north of Damascus which was not possible without deploying a large number of asses and camels to carry men and the supplies there. (Gen 14:14-17). His glorious success must have made him the strongest chieftain in Canaan and a prominent figure in the Middle-East. Even Melchizedeq, the King of Salem and a priest of the Most High God felt so much impressed by the triumph of Abraham that he went out to the valley of Shaveh to greet and bless him there (Gen 14:17-19). A short while thereafter, we find Abraham walking on foot in the company of two young men and the child along with an ass carrying the wood which depicts a destitute traveller traversing the land haplessly than Abraham, the mighty chieftain of the Southern Canaan, and the commandant of a strong armed force having vast resources at his disposal. In his new guise, Abraham was an impoverished stranger in the strange land. The riches, the strong army and a large number of slaves, asses and camels possessed by Abraham were of no avail to him in the ordeal.

We also do not find any compatibility of the narrative of sacrifice with another description where Abraham sent his servant to Mesopotamia to get a wife for Isaac. The servant "took ten of his master's camels and went to the city where Nahor had lived in Northern Mesopotamia" (Gen. 24:10). It is unbelievable, therefore, that Abraham, the master and the rich and the most resourceful Sheikh of Canaan travels along with his beloved son Isaac (the crown prince and the sole inheritor) with two servants on foot like some destitute and helpless traveller in distress. Similarly, the story of Abraham having a large fighting force cannot be reconciled with the description when 3 men visited his tent (Gen 18:1-7). Abraham seemed to be all alone there in his tent. He himself ran to the herd and picked out a calf. No fighting force, other persons or a family could be seen around his tent. Such inconsistencies suit much better to mythology or fiction for the infants than to be included in the Holy Writ as the word of God to be taken as an ultimate truth.

ii) Abraham Clave Wood for the Burnt Offering:

Most of the expositors of the Bible have given an impression that Abraham had moved from Beersheba to Salem for the sacrifice. We observe that Salem was a well populated city of the Jebusites and it was ruled by Melchizedek during those days. There was no dearth of wood at Salem as there has always been a lot of wood around the area. Even the verse Genesis 22:13 tells us that Abraham "found behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns". The ram was caught in **a thicket** suggests that there might have been some more thickets of the kind. As such, there were abundant sources of firewood already at the site of the altar showing futility of taking the firewood from Beersheba to Salem. Even otherwise, Abraham was a very rich man as the Genesis makes us believe. Hence, instead of carrying wood to a far off place, he could have easily purchased the same on the spot. Under the circumstances, the statement of carrying an ass load of wood all along from Beersheba to Jerusalem i.e. a distance of about 48 miles, is incompatible with the entire background of Abraham and circumstantial evidence around the site of the altar. Similarly, verse 22:6 suggests that aside from the firewood, Abraham had taken along with him a knife and the fire from Beersheba to the land of Moriah. Such a necessity could arise only if the said Moriah would have been in some wilderness without any inhabitation there. If it were at Salem, the capital city of King Malechsedec, there would have been no dearth of fire or the firewood there. Due to all such discrepancies in the narrative, we may better take it as a myth than a statement of facts.

iii) The Place, Which God had Told Him:

This phrase suggests that the place, meant for sacrifice, had no name with which Abraham could identify the same. Anyhow, it negates any possibility of Salem being the site of sacrifice as God as well as Abraham already knew the name, the place, and the ruler of Salem. If, therefore,

Salem were the site of sacrifice, God would directly tell Abraham to go to Salem, and there was no need to use the vague terminology such as 'the place' instead of the proper name 'Salem'.

It is worth-noting that Salem at that time was, perhaps, the most populous and famous city in Canaan which was ruled by Melchizedek, the king and priest of the Most High God. Salem must be having walls around the city with gates like Sodom and Shechem (Gen 19:1 and 34:20). Although the Biblical narrative does not tell us as to whether the place of sacrifice was inside the city walls or outside it, yet it was unlikely that Abraham, who was previously greeted as a triumphant chieftain by the King of Salem, might have chosen to go there in the apparel of a destitute wanderer on foot just accompanied by two men, an infant child and an ass. Abraham obviously did not go there to commit a crime nor was he a sneak to construct an altar on the said land without permission of the owners. As such, Abraham's visit to the so-called mount Moriah, without informing Melechsedec about the purpose of his visit, seems to be impossible. We, however, feel that the verse Gen 22:2 suggests a deserted place instead of Mount Moriah which did not have that name even centuries after the death/ascension of Jesus Christ. The ambiguity is mainly due to the lack of knowledge about the place and the true events of the sacrifice which took place at Makkah.

Verse 4:

"Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and **saw the place afar off**". (Gen 22:4 KJV)

This verse tells us that on the third day of his journey, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. The place was later on identified by 2Ch 3:1 as the Threshing-floor of Araunah or Ornan the Jabusite where David built an altar unto the Lord so that the plague might be stayed from the people. Subsequently, Solomon built his temple there and the place became known as the Temple Hill. The said place was not visible from afar off as it was hidden by higher mountains around it. One could only see this place

when one reached closer to it from the south-eastern side. Since the proposed site could not be seen from afar off, therefore, either the narrative of the verse 4, stated above, is incorrect or the same was not the place of sacrifice as implied by the verse 22:4 of the Genesis.

Verse 5 tells us that Abraham did not disclose to his servants about the purpose of his visit. He concealed the same by telling a lie. He said to them "*Abide ye here with the ass. And I and the lad will go yonder and worship. And come again to you.*" (Gen 22:5). This shows that instead of telling the truth, Abraham allegedly resorted to falsehood. We, therefore, find no sound reason for stealthy visit of Abraham to Salem without sharing the secret even with Sarah, Isaac or his servants. **As no prophet of the Lord is expected to tell lies, therefore, the narration of the sacrifice in the Genesis cannot be taken as correct.**

Verse 6 makes us believe that on seeing the 'place afar off', Abraham released the ass and laid the ass-load of firewood on Isaac for the burnt offering and laid it upon his son Isaac who was, perhaps, 8 years old. The composers have nothing to tell us as to why Abraham sought no help from the servants and why he did not utilize the ass taken all along with the sole purpose of carrying the firewood to the site of the sacrifice. They also fail to explain as to how it was possible for a child of 8 years to carry an ass load of firewood to 'afar off' place on the hill. **The inconsistencies, as above, suggest that the narration is neither trustworthy nor does it contain a natural depiction of the episode.**

Verse 7 tells us that when Isaac asked his father as to where was the lamb for a burnt offering, Abraham replied him that God would provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. Obviously, Abraham again told a lie to the face of his son and deceived him about the eventuality. Alternatively, **if the outcome was known to Abraham**

before hand and he was truthful about his declaration, then the entire narration is a farce and it was more of a ridicule than a test and trial of Abraham and Isaac. We don't think that God required Abraham to perform a fake play without there being anything at stake in the real sense. Factually, it was a matter of great concern for Abraham to sacrifice his only son Ishmael begotten in the old age without there being any fore-knowledge of his substitution with a lamb. The test was real one in which God found Abraham extremely faithful in carrying out the commandment. Had Abraham any foreknowledge of the substitution of lamb, in place of Ishmael, there would have been neither any test nor anything of credit for Abraham. Only an unwavering faith and complete and unconditional submission to the will of God deserves ample reward from God Who is All-knowing, All-wise, and cannot be misled by fake play by the victim or any false claim of the scribes.

Verse 8, 9 and 10 tell us that Abraham told his son that God Himself would provide a lamb for the burnt offering. It is further said that after building the altar, Abraham tied up his son and placed him on the top of the wood. Normally, the victim of sacrifice is first killed and then placed on the fire-wood but here we find the other way round. Anyhow, the story cannot be as simple as that. It was natural for the child to resist the sacrifice and to protest against the cheating action of his father. If, however, Isaac were not a child and he were of about 25 years as some commentators suggest, it would not be possible for Abraham either to bind him or to place him on the wood without a willing cooperation of Isaac, finds no mention in the narrative. Since Isaac neither agreed to the sacrifice nor had any knowledge of the intentions of his father, therefore, just being killed like a lamb, gives no credit to him unless and until he willingly agreed to be sacrificed to the Lord. This shows that the authors of the Gen 22:2 have failed to depict the episode in accordance with the natural context of the same. Their failure was mainly due to the fact that they were working on the theme

borrowed from the Arabs. The narrative of sacrifice as we find in the Genesis is not, therefore, a faithfully recorded description of the event.

The verse 10 tells us that after placing Isaac on the firewood, Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. The narration, as such, is simply a make-believe statement. It fails to depict the natural reaction of the child caught by surprise. There is no mention of his protest against the falsehood and the deception on the part of his father. It was natural for the child to cry for help or resist the sacrifice. Hence, the all is well report of the Genesis without showing any pathos or response of the victim to the unexpected affliction has no credibility in it.

The verses 11, 12 and 13 again refer to '**thy only son**' offered for sacrifice. The stress on 'thy only son' is extremely important, and is the main clue to point out that the name of Isaac in Gen 22:2 is a pious fraud committed by some redactors of the Old Testament. We have discussed earlier that Ishmael had been the only son of Abraham for 14 years while **Isaac had never been the only son at any time during the life of Abraham**. The term, 'only son', in the aforesaid verses also signifies that Abraham had no other son except the one being sacrificed. Being the first born of Abraham, Ishmael was the only son of Abraham up to the birth of Isaac and the commandment of sacrifice pertains to the period before the birth of Isaac when Ishmael, the only son of Abraham, was ordered to be sacrificed at the House of the Lord. **The scribes, perhaps, found it difficult to obliterate the term 'thy only son' from three different verses of the narrative i.e. verse 2, 12, and 16 of Gen 22.** Hence, they achieved their target merely by inserting Isaac after "thine only son" in verse Gen 22:2. Anyhow, in the presence of 'thy only son' in the text, the addition of Isaac in Gen 22:2 is not only superfluous but also contradictory to the aforesaid term. Since Isaac had never been the only son of Abraham,

therefore, the identification of the only son as Isaac is a clear-cut contradiction of the Old Testament which repeatedly confirms Ishmael as the first born of Abraham.

As discussed in detail elsewhere, only the first-born belonged to God and had to be dedicated to Him. The dedicated one could not inherit any property throughout his life. As Isaac did receive all the wealth of Abraham, therefore, it proves that he was neither dedicated to the Lord nor was he offered as a sacrifice. The alleged sacrifice of Isaac, contradicting the law of the Lord has, therefore, no meaning in the real sense as the same contradicts the commandments and the law of God.

In verse 14, we find that Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovah-jireh**. There are good reasons to believe that Abraham could not have uttered those words and they seem to be insertions of scribes of a later period. Peake, a renowned commentator of the Bible, has given following comments on the phrase:

Very difficult. E cannot have written in its present form for he cannot use Yehwa. Yet he must have recorded the giving of the name. Yehwa presumably was originally Uloheen or Ele and Gunkel had brilliantly suggested that the name was Yeru Ele (2-Ch. 20:16)

We feel that even Peake has, in a way, tried to cover the obvious discrepancy in the narrative. Factually, neither Abraham named the place as Jehovah-jireh nor was it possible for him to do so. The following verse from the Exodus reveals the same:

"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, **but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them".** (Ex 6:2-3)

Since the name of God Yahweh was not known to Abraham, therefore, it was not possible for him to use the phrase 'Jehovah Jireh' and it seems to be the handiwork of some pious scribe of a later date. As such, the narration 'Jehovah Jireh' in the verse 14 of the Genesis 22 is obviously incorrect. This reminds us of a famous legal maxim that 'if

the part of a story is incorrect, then the entire story is incorrect'.

It is also worth-mentioning here that Jehovah-jireh has been translated by the commentators as 'the Lord will provide.' We, however, observe that Jehovah-jireh' is another form of 'Yahweh yra' and 'Yra' in the Semitic languages is connected with seeing, than providing. Such a term can be translated as 'God is seeing', or 'God may see you or look after'. In Persian, there is a word 'Khuda Hafiz' which means 'God may look after you.' Such words are used when one is departing from his beloved ones. This also suggests that after the episode of sacrifice, Abraham was returning from Makkah, leaving his beloved son there, and while departing from him, he might have used the words 'Jehovah-jireh' or perhaps some other Arabic equivalent of the same. These words could be pronounced by the Hebrews as 'Jehovah-jireh.' That the said remarks cannot be taken to mean 'God will provide' or 'God provides' is obvious from the fact that Abraham had no foreknowledge of God's plan in the matter, and he could not have uttered those words as against clear-cut and unchanging Commandment of God to sacrifice his only son there.

Verse 17 is as under:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; (Gen 22:17 KJV)

For a proper analysis, we divide the afore-stated verse into three parts:

i) That in blessing I will bless thee:

A study of the history, faith, and literature of Israel as well as the Christians shows that they never blessed Abraham whereas there is ample evidence in their writings that they have held him very low and have presented a tarnished figure of the patriarch. The Israelites have shown him as a

venal person, fond of telling lies, and lending his wife to kings under the garb of his sister to save his own skin and to gain material benefits. Abraham has also been shown as a coward person, unjust, and cruel in his dealings with his wife Hagar and Ishmael, his son. Except for showing him building three or four altars at different places for sacrifice and worship of God, we do not find anything else to depict him in the most exalted and unique character deserving the blessings of the Lord. The voluminous Old Testament does not contain even a few verses eulogizing the work and conduct of Abraham as a distinguished religious teacher, preacher, reformer or a righteous prophet of the Lord. We also know that God blessed the descendants of Abraham through Isaac by sending thousands of prophets to them, and also wrought many miracles to save and protect Israelites from their oppressors. In spite of all this, the Israelites proved to be stubborn and arrogant people who rebelled and sinned against the Lord again and again. They, as such, earned wrath of God by distorting and violating His Commandments. The history of Israel, therefore, does not portray them blessing Abraham or receiving God's blessings through him. This was, perhaps, the reason that the Israelites had been meager recipients of the blessings of God promised to Abraham.

As regards the Christians, they have also dwarfed Abraham before Jesus and even in comparison with other followers of Jesus (Joh 8:53-57). The verse 58 shows the same as under:

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (KJV)

Many Christians even doubt the prophet-hood of Abraham. They never blessed him nor expected to receive any blessings through him. Abraham is acknowledged as a forefather of Jesus only to get the scriptural support for the seed of Abraham i.e. (Jesus) as a blessing and savior for the mankind. It is, however, worth-noting that both The Bible and The Quran agree on miraculous birth of Jesus, which negates his being the seed of Abraham as propounded by the Christians. We, therefore, conclude that

neither Jesus was the seed of Abraham nor did the Christians seek any blessings through him. **Factually, the Muslims happen to be the only people in the world who bless Abraham day and night and seek the blessings of the Almighty through him.**

It is interesting to note that the largest numbers of the descendants of Abraham are the progeny of Ishmael, and almost all of them accepted Islam. All practicing Muslims bless Abraham and his descendants about 20 times during their routine prayers everyday throughout the world. God also made it imperative for the Muslims to bless Prophet Muhammad(PBUH), his progeny, and his followers as we find in the Quran:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلِّوْنَ عَلَى الْجَيْشِ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّمَا صَلَوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمُوا
تَسْلِيمًا

"Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect. (Al-Quran: 33:56)

Consequently, the Muslims obeying the fore-stated Commandment of God, send blessings on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his progeny in the following words, taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (صلی الله علیہ وسلم):

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ حَمِيدٌ.. اللَّهُمَّ بارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ حَمِيدٌ.

"O Allah, exalt Muhammad and the followers of Muhammad, as Thou did exalt Ibrahim and his followers. Thou art the Praised, the Glorious. **O Allah, bless Muhammad and his followers, as Thou has blest Ibrahim and his followers. Thou art the Praised, the Glorious".**

We, therefore, find such individuals among the Muslims who repeat these blessings, perhaps, more than a thousand times a day. **No other nation of the world blesses**

Abraham and his progeny the way Muslims bless him.

Similarly, no people can compete with the Muslims in seeking the blessings of God the way He blessed Abraham and his progeny / followers. This, perhaps, is the living proof throughout the world that the progeny of Ishmael are the proper recipients of most of the blessings promised to Abraham in consequence of his submission to the will of God culminating in the offering of Ishmael as a sacrifice to the Almighty.

The Muslims believe that Abraham had been the greatest prophet between Adam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

The Islamic traditions show Abraham as an extremely righteous person and a leader (Imam), role model for all human beings as we discussed earlier. Both the Israelites and the Christians deviated from the real teachings of Abraham while all the prophets including Jesus have been trying to retrieve them and to direct them to the straight path. Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), too, did not introduce any new faith except that of Abraham's and of all other prophets of the world. Since, the followers of different prophets have been distorting the original teachings of their prophets over a period of time, the Lord sent His final revelations primarily through the immutable and everlasting text of the Quran and secondly through direct inspirations to the Prophet to lead them back to the pure monotheistic faith of Abraham. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the most successful prophet in the history of the world who called all the nations of the world to adopt the straight path of Abraham and the path of true prophets descended from him to receive the promised blessings of the Lord. Among all those prophets, Muhammad (PBUH) was a great success. Hence, the number of practicing Muslims exceeds many times as compared with the practicing followers of other religions in the world. **The Muslims are, therefore, the main recipients of the blessings of God promised through Abraham.** Similarly, we find that among the descendants of Abraham, only the Muslims are as numerous as the stars of heaven or as many as grains of sand on the sea-shore. As against this, the Israelites never exceeded a limited

number. Initially, they remained confined in and around Canaan and subsequently dispersed among other nations of the world. Since only a small number of the descendants of Abraham converted to Christianity, therefore, other Christians are only the followers of Abraham but not among his descendants.

ii) That in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore.

This part of the verse shows that while multiplying the people, God will primarily multiply the seed of Abraham. History tells us that God amply blessed Abraham by granting him Ishmael, Isaac, 6 sons from Keturah and 5 sons from Hajun. The descendants of Abraham multiplied rapidly and spread in different areas of the continents of Asia and Africa. They soon took hold of vast territories in the said continents, and all prophets, after Abraham, were raised from among his progeny. As against their boastful claims, the **Israelites have always been a small faction of the descendants of Abraham and most probably, they never exceeded three or four percent of the total progeny of Abraham**. The majority group among the descendants of Abraham had been Ishmaelites who alone might have exceeded 10 times the total number of Israelites. It is also note-worthy that the Israelites remained confined mostly within Canaan / Palestine, an area not exceeding 6,040 sq miles, while the other descendants of Abraham held thousand times more lands as compared with the possessions of Israelites. This refutes the claim of the Israelites that God had promised to give descendants to Abraham only through Isaac who would hold the entire land of Canaan as their everlasting possession.

We observe that even the whole of Canaan did not remain in the possession of Israel for a period exceeding 300 years while they continually remained in power only in certain parts of Canaan for another 400 years. After Abraham,

Canaan remained in the possession of different nations till the conquests of Joshua, the son of Noon. It is said that soon after the death of Joshua, the next generation forgot the Lord and started worshipping Baals. They stopped worshipping the Lord and overall disintegration took place in the community (Judges 2:10-12). There had been a chaos during the period of the Judges, and the strong-hold of Israelites was visible only during a period of about 70 years from the conquest of Jerusalem by David to the death of Solomon. Soon after the aforesaid death, the kingdom was divided into Judea and Israel and bitter enmity prevailed between the two kingdoms of the Israelites. The Northern Kingdom, known as Israel, with its capital Samaria, was destroyed in 722 BC by Shalmaneser, the King of Assyria who took along with him as captives the ten tribes of Israel living in the north. Subsequently, many of the captives were sold as slaves, and dispersed throughout the world. Judea, the southern kingdom, somehow lingered on up to 587 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem including the temple and the walls around the city. Most of the people were either killed or taken as prisoners to Babylonia where they remained as slaves for about 70 years. Later on, Cyrus, the King of Assyria, released some of the captives / slaves with the permission to go to Palestine while others had already been sold out and lost forever. The events i.e. dispersal of the northern tribes in 722 AD and others after 587 B.C. are remembered as Diaspora in the history of Israel. Even after these events, the former Canaan remained under the subjugation of various nations including the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. The Muslims took over the area from the Romans in about 638 AD. Subsequently, the Muslims being the descendants or followers of Ishmael held Canaan under their rule for about 1300 years i.e. more than twice the period the Israelites had full or partial control over Canaan / Palestine. This proves that the Promise of God to give possession of the entire land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham pertained more to the Ishmaelites than to the Israelites.

iii. And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies:

There is no doubt that the seed of Abraham possessed the gates of his enemies in major part of Asia and Africa but they had mostly been the Ishmaelites. Israelites, however, held only small territories in and around Canaan during a small span of history. Mostly, they remained oppressed, enslaved, and dispersed in different areas of the world which shows that they cannot be considered as the appropriate possessors of the gates of their enemies.

Verse 18:

And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;
because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Gen 22:18 KJV)

The first part of this verse contains the blessings of the Lord on Abraham informing him that in his seed all the nations of the Earth will be blessed. This, perhaps, means that all the future prophets will be raised from among the descendants of Abraham. From the 'seed', we understand the entire progeny of Abraham including descendants of Ishmael, Isaac and all other sons of Abraham. The word 'seed', therefore, does not denote a single or a particular person as professed by certain Christian commentators. No doubt, God raised a large number of prophets from among the descendants of Isaac while others were raised from among the descendants of Ishmael and other sons of Abraham. It is pity, however, that the Israelites tried to reserve all the blessings only for the descendants of Jacob. They declared even the Almighty as the personal God of the Jews and limited all his blessings to their own clan. The Israelites excluded descendants of Abraham other than the progeny of Jacob from blessings of God. To establish their superiority over other nations around them, they consigned the said nations to other gods who were considered lesser gods as compared with the Lord God of Israel. For this, they paid no heed to monotheistic teachings of their prophets. Thus, in spite of their established faith of monotheism, they were obliged to acknowledge many other lesser gods for other nations. Instead of submitting themselves to the will of God, the Israelites themselves

made changes in the text of the Bible to make it acceptable to Israel. The blessings promised to all the nations of the world through the seed (progeny) of Abraham as we find in the verse 18 quoted above, were thus limited to Israel sparing no blessings for other nations on the Earth. Similarly, by inserting the name of Isaac in place of Ishmael in the verse Gen 22:2, they attempted to exclude the Ishmaelites from the said blessings. False claims, however, cannot change the actual course of the history and traditions in the world. Arabs of the Old and subsequently the Muslims of the world followed the footsteps of Abraham and Ishmael in performing Hajj at Makkah. They continued to offer their sacrifices there and performed other rituals in accordance with the Commandments of God and teachings of Abraham, and became the best recipients of the blessings of God promised through Abraham.

Blessing for all the worlds

It is also worth-noting that the seed in which all the nations of the world are blessed, cannot be Jesus as propounded by the Christians. Jesus himself declared emphatically that "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mat 15:24 KJV). He also advised his apostles saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mat 10:5-6). As such, Jesus, too, was a blessing only for Israel. Alas! Even Israel failed to receive him. Most of them opposed him while others deserted him to meet his fate ending in crucifixion or ascension to heaven. Later on, St. Paul promoted Jesus, from a man and prophet of Israel to the son of God and, perhaps, the godhead and savior of the mankind. St. Paul claimed to have abrogated the law of Moses replacing the same with his own law and also advocating unconditional submission to the Law of the Romans. Blessings in response to such an act can no longer be considered from God, rather they come either from the Romans or from St. Paul.

We, therefore, conclude that the universal blessings of God for all the nations of the world were bestowed only through

Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who asserted that the Almighty was the ‘Rabbul Aalamin’ (رب العالمين) (The Sustainer of all the worlds). The opening verse of the Al-Quran is: ‘الحمد لله رب العالمين’ means ‘Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds.’

Corresponding to this, God addressed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as under:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures. (Al-Quran 21:107)

As against prophets of Israel including Jesus, it was only Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who from the first day of his mission declared himself to be a Prophet for all the people of the world. He gave a call to all the nations on earth in the east or west, north or south, black or white, Arabs or non Arabs for establishing unity of mankind based on the unity of Faith in oneness of God of the universe. He asserted that:-

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "إِنَّ اللَّهَ [عَزَّ وَجَلَّ] قَدْ أَنْهَبَ عَنْكُمْ عِصَمَةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ وَغَرَّهَا بِالْأَكَامِ، مُؤْمِنٌ تَقِيٌّ وَفَاجِرٌ شَقِيٌّ، أَنْتُمْ بَنُو آدَمَ، وَآدَمُ مِنْ تَرَابٍ لَيَدِ عَنْ رَجُلٍ فَخُرُّهُمْ بِأَقْوَامٍ، إِنَّمَا هُمْ فَحْمٌ مِنْ خَمْ جَهَنَّمَ، أَوْ لِيَكُونَنَّ أَهُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنَ الْجَعْلَانِ الَّتِي تَدْفعُ بِأَنْفَهَا النَّنَنِ".

“Narrated AbuHurayrah: The Prophet (peace_be_upon_him) said: Allah, Most High, has removed from you the pride of the pre-Islamic period and its boasting in ancestors. One is only a pious believer or a miserable sinner. You are sons of Adam, and Adam came from dust. Let the people cease to boast about their ancestors. They are merely fuel in Jahannam; or they will certainly be of less account with Allah than the beetle which rolls dung with its nose.”

(Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith No. 5097)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not discriminate between and among the people on the basis of their color, blood,

region, or the caste. No one could claim any superiority over others on the grounds stated above. The one and the only factor, discriminating the people as declared by God Himself, was as under:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّنْ ذَرَّةٍ وَأَنْتُمْ شُعُوبٌ وَقَبَائِيلٌ لِتَعَارَفُوا
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنَّقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَمِيرٌ

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-Quran: 49:13)

Thus, all the people of the world deserved blessings of God merely on the basis of submission to the Will of God. The fear of God and meticulous compliance to the Commandments of the Lord were the only factors through which one could deserve more veneration in the eye of the Lord as compared with those who rebelled against Him. As such, the blessings of God through the seed of Abraham, have been conveyed to the world, primarily, through the descendants of Ishmael and through the followers of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) fulfilling the prophecy in toto.

Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) laid the foundations of universal brotherhood and peaceful co-existence of mankind on the basis of the Law of the Lord which was the main basis of peace, justice, righteousness, and equality of all the nations of the world before God. He upheld teachings of all the prophets before him and restored the faith to its pristine purity. He removed all the artificial barriers between and among the nations, and said:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ بِجَمِيعِ الِّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ الَّذِي أَنْذَى الِّذِي
يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكُلُّهُمْ أَتَبْغُونَهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهَنَّدُونَ

Say: "O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah,

to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He: it is He That giveth both life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, who believeth in Allah and His words: follow him that (so) ye may be guided." (Al-Quran: 7:158)

The second part of the verse Gen 22:18 is extremely important. It tells us that God promised to bless all the nations of the Earth through the seed of Abraham because he fully obeyed the commandments of God. As regards Israel, they had been stubborn people who rebelled against God again and again, and also sinned against Him repeatedly. They forgot that no blessings could be inherited without obeying the commandments of the Lord and without following the righteous conduct of the prophets. Such were the people about whom Ezekiel tells us:

The Lord spoke to me. "Mortal man, "he said, "if a country sins and is unfaithful to me, I will stretch out my hand and destroy its supply of food. I will send a famine and kill people and animals alike. Even if those three men, Noah, Danel, and Job, were living there, their goodness would save only their own lives." The Sovereign Lord has spoken. (Ezk 14:12-14 GNB)

Israelites, therefore, did not earn / deserve the blessings of God as they did not follow the traditions of the prophets. As for blessings to all other nations of the world, they refused to tolerate any other people with them under the universal banner of the Lord. They cautiously promoted the ethnicity and self service of Israel. Abraham, the ancestor of all the people of Book was denied that unique honor by making him only the ancestor of Israel. The sacred sacrifice made by Abraham was claimed for Isaac instead of Ishmael. Isn't it a curious paradox, therefore, that on the one hand, they claimed the honor of sacrifice of Isaac by inserting his name in the Genesis but on the other hand, they denied and refuted the said tradition in the practical life of Israel? Do we find any justification to believe their contention against those who kept the said tradition alive with all its attending rituals, continuously

during 3800 years since the sacrifice made by Abraham? The readers are the best judges of the matter.

Similarly, the Christians, too, have set aside all the commandments of God and have instead replaced the same with the man-made commandments being most attractive to them. The followers of St. Paul, on the other hand, proudly declare themselves free from the law of the Lord because Paul says that I have torn the law. Moreover, in his letter to Galatians, he said:

Those who depend on obeying the law live under a curse. (Gal 3:10 GNB)

In Timothy, he says:

It (law) must be, not for good people, but for lawbreakers and criminals, for the godless and sinful, for those who are not religious or spiritual, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the immoral, for sexual perverts, for kidnappers, for those who lie and give false testimony or who do anything else contrary to sound doctrine. (1 Tim 1:9-10 GNB)

As such, St. Paul has turned the blessings into a curse. God sent the law to guide all the people towards righteousness. St. Paul, however, perverts the word of God by excluding the application of law on the good people. It also implies that there was no possibility of receiving the blessings of God by obedience to the commandments of the Lord. The followers of St. Paul, therefore, deny those blessings by their own acts and deeds. The Muslims are the only people who follow the footsteps of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and other prophets including Jesus. They do obey the Commandments of the Lord in all aspects of life and also commemorate the sacrifice of Ishmael as their greatest festival in the world every year.

Finally, we come to the **verse 19** which tells us that Abraham, Isaac and his men returned to Beersheba. The same was the wilderness to which Ishmael and Hagar were sent away. (Gen. 21:9-21). Archeological findings, however, deny existence of any settlement at Beersheba prior to the reign of King David. As such, Abraham's living at Beersheba is doubtful. Factually, Beersheba i.e. 'the well of the seven' is a reference to Zamzam at Makkah and both

Abraham and Isaac have been visiting the place where Hagar had emigrated along with her infant child Ishmael. As such, if they started from Beersheba and returned there, then the son to be sacrificed was Ishmael and not Isaac who lived with his mother at Hebron. It transpires from the above that **the original writer of the Genesis 22 had written the name of Ishmael but some scribes or priests replaced Ishmael with Isaac which is obviously against the facts.** All this leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the entire narrative of sacrifice suffers from irreconcilable discrepancies disqualifying the assertion to be taken as true.

REASONS TO DISPROVE THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

1. Dedicated Cannot Be Domesticated

Aside from our detailed analysis of the narration of sacrifice in the previous chapter, we also have other reasons to believe that the commandment of sacrifice did not pertain to Isaac, as we shall discuss hereunder:

As a matter of principle, a person once dedicated to the Lord remains dedicated forever. The dedicated person cannot inherit or share any property or wealth with the other people of God throughout his life. In the Israelites, only the first-born belonged to God and the Levites, under the leadership of Aaron's family, were dedicated to serve the Lord. The tradition had been the legacy of Ishmael being the first person dedicated to the House of the Lord at Makkah. Subsequently, the Lord God revealed it as a law for the Israelites.

"The Lord said to Aaron, "You will not receive any property that can be inherited, and no part of the land to Israel will be assigned to you. I, the Lord, am all you need." (Num 18:20 GNB)

Ishmael was undoubtedly the first-born of Abraham. Being dedicated to the Lord, he did not inherit anything from

Abraham throughout his life. He neither claimed any inheritance from his father nor did he show any embitterment against Isaac's becoming the inheritor of Abraham. Ishmael belonged to God and God was everything for him.

Actually, the commandment depriving the dedicated one of inheriting anything has its origin in Ishmael and the Lord God made the same incumbent on the Israelites as legacy of Abraham and Ishmael. Hence, **the Ishmaelites did not inherit anything material from Abraham whereas, they became recipients of the everlasting spiritual inheritance from him.** The everlasting and the final covenant formalized through the promised Prophet was, therefore, inherited by the Ishmaelites who as trustees of the said covenant kept it intact during the last 1400 years and we hope that the same will remain uncorrupted till the doomsday. As against this, the covenant with Isaac as detailed in the Genesis pertains mainly to the land of Canaan but the same, too, was fulfilled partly and for a limited period of time. As such, Isaac being domesticated recipient of the material inheritance and the land of Canaan had no chance to receive any command from God to be sacrificed. Only the first born or the dedicated one such as the Levites belonged to the Lord. They, therefore, stood deprived of any share in the inheritance. This had been the unchanging Law of the Lord who says:-

"I am the Lord and I do not change". (Mal 3:6 GNB)

We also read in Isaiah as follows:

Yes, grass withers and flowers fade, but the word of our God endures for ever. (Isa 40:8 GNB)

The recipient of the temporal inheritance, therefore, cannot be the dedicated one nor would the Lord change the universally applicable law of the sacrifice of the first born only to sanctify the ancestor of the Israelites. Only one side of the globe can be illuminated by the sun at one and the same time. The efforts of the Israelites to brighten the front as well as back of their globe, therefore, seem to be ridiculous. As such, the inheritance of the Land and wealth from Abraham disqualifies Isaac from belonging to the

Lord. Factually, he had never been dedicated to the Lord and remained at home with his parents. It is interesting to note here that even the expositors of the Bible describe Isaac under the title '**Isaac the Domesticated**'. (*Expositors Dictionary of Texts*, Hodder and Stoughton Limited, London, 1910, p. 45).

There is no doubt that the word of God does not change. It is disdainful, even for the kings, to cancel their own orders. An interesting instance can be found in the Book of Esther, to which we make a concise reference as under:

On the instigation of Haman, the Prime Minister, the Persian emperor Xerxes issued a decree that all the Jews in his empire might be put to death. (Esther: Chp 3). Learning this, Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, who had become the Queen of Xerxes, persuaded the King to cancel the decree, to which he replied:

"But a proclamation issued in the king's name and stamped with the royal seal cannot be revoked. You may however write to the Jews whatever you wish, and you may write it in my name and stamp it with the royal seal." (Esther 8:8 GNB)

Another instance of the same is found in the Book of Daniel. It is said that during the reign of king Darius, some supervisors and governors obtained a decree from the King to the effect that for thirty days, no one would be permitted to request for anything from any god or any man except from the king himself. Anyone violating the order will be thrown into a pit filled with lions. (Dan 6:7). It so happened that Daniel, the most trusted favorite of King Darius, was found praying to the Lord. The complainants said to the king "Your majesty knows that according to the laws of the Medes and the Persians no order which the King issues can be changed." (Dan 6:15b GNB). Eventually, the kings had to throw Daniel into the pit filled with lions. Law could not be relaxed nor made inoperative for Daniel, the favorite of the King. Anyhow, it was the Lord God who saved Daniel

miraculously and he was restored to his previous position only after going through the ordeal.

SACRIFICE OF ISAAC CONTRADICTS THE LAW OF GOD

If it is against the prestige of an ordinary king to revoke his proclamation, **it is far against the prestige and integrity of the Almighty God to issue a commandment to revoke his own law.** Since only the first-born belonged to the Lord, therefore, there can be no truth in the narration that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

Ishmael being the first-born, belonged to the Lord, and due to his dedication, Abraham had already separated him from the family. Under the circumstances, God's orders to sacrifice Isaac, sparing Ishmael, would be contradicting His own Law which demanded the dedication and sacrifice of only the first-born who belonged to him. Factually, Ishmael stood before the House of the Lord as a dedicated person and priest, and did not inherit even a penny from the wealth of his father at any time in his life. **Ishmael was, therefore, the first person in the history of mankind who was dedicated to the Lord** and stood before the House of God at Makkah. He belonged to God and only God was his inheritance. Deuteronomy ratifies the same:-

"At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him." (Deu 10:8-9 KJV)

"The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them". (Deu 18:1-2 KJV)

We, therefore, understand that the '**lying pen of scribes'** has changed the Genesis. It was Ishmael and not Isaac

who was offered for sacrifice. Jews being aware of the Law knew full well that only the sacrifice of Ishmael conformed to the Divine Writ. Due to their prejudice against the Ishmaelites, however, **they resorted to doing in the Old Testament with their own pen what God did not do for them. The scribes, therefore, changed everything in the Old Testament which they found against the self-interest of Israel.** Prophets, like Jeremiah, resented the said trend, as we find recorded below:-

"And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for **ye have perverted the words of the living God**, of the LORD of hosts our God". (Jer 23:36 KJV)

And also this:

"How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; **the pen of the scribes is in vain.** 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 8:8-9 KJV)

The aforesaid verses have been rendered in different words by GNB, as under:

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

It, therefore, suggests that the dishonest scribes have changed the word of God to make it acceptable to Israel. The fact is that Ishmael was, perhaps, the first person who was deprived of any inheritance, only on the ground that he belonged to God and God was everything for him. It was, therefore, Ishmael and not Isaac who was actually offered for sacrifice. Since then God has kept his tradition alive at Makkah till today. Hundreds of millions of sacrifices are made by the Muslims each year on the 10th of Zil-Hajj throughout the world as a testimony to the said tradition of sacrifice and the same is enough to repudiate the perverted versions in the text of the Genesis.

THE RIGHT OF THE FIRST-BORN IS NOT TRANSFERABLE

There is no law, tradition, or any other justification to deprive the first-born of his birth-right as stated clearly in the Bible. About inheritance of the first-born, it is said that:

"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)

It is, therefore, confirmed that the law of the lord does not allow that the first-born may be deprived of his birth-right at any cost. The Nuzi Laws in vogue at the time also substantiate the same as we read in the following:

A text from Nuzi explains how in certain marriage contracts a childless wife could be required to provide her husband with just such a substitute. Furthermore, if a child was subsequently born to the slave, **Nuzi law forbade the expulsion of the slave wife** – and perhaps this could explain why Abraham was so reluctant to send away Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:9-13). Another way in which childless couples at Nuzi could ensure the continuation of their family line was by adopting a slave who would take the place of a son. (An Introduction to the Bible, by John Drane, page 44, Lion Publishing London, 1990)

Only the First-born are Dedicated to the Lord

It has always been the unchanging law of God that the first born of all human beings and the animals belong to God. In the Good News Bible, Chapter 13 of Exodus starts with the title "Dedication of The First Born" which is as under:

The Lord said to Moses, "Dedicate all the first-born males to me, for every first-born male Israelite and every first-born male animal belongs to me". (Ex. 1:1 GNB)

Further in the same chapter, we find verses as under:

Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. (Ex. 13:2 KJV)

You must offer every first-born male to the Lord. Every first-born male of your animals belongs to the Lord. (Ex. 13:12 GNB)

You must buy back every first-born male child of yours. (Ex. 13:13 GNB)

Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: **the firstborn of thy sons** shalt thou give unto me. (Ex. 22:29 KJV)

Other commandments about the first-born are quoted below:-

Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt **I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast:** mine shall they be: I am the LORD. (Num. 3:13 KJV)

For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. (Num. 8:17 KJV)

The tradition of the sacrifice of the first-born persists since Adam and Abel. We, therefore, find that:-

Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, but he rejected Cain and his offering. (Gen. 4:4 GNB)

We know that God is almighty, all-knowing and wise. He has no infirmity in Him. God, therefore, cannot be expected to revoke His own law or to give commandments conflicting with each other. It is said that:-

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num 23:19 KJV)

We, however, observe that the Israelites have always been a stubborn nation used to opposing and violating the commandments of God. As usual, they oppose the Almighty in making Ishmael, the first-born son of Abraham. They did not tolerate that the hallowing grace of being offered as a

sacrifice to God should go to the credit of Ishmael. The Israelites, therefore, attempted to undo the work of God by their own concocted falsification inserted into the Holy Book. Such fabrications, however, fail to change the actual history, the blessings or the will of God.

Abraham & Ishmael; the Fathers in faith of the Muslims

Among the followers of Abraham, Ishmael was the first messenger to form a *Muslim Ummah* in Arabia. It was about 500-600 years after him that the Lord God relieved the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt and chose them for the test and trial, which extended more than 1400 years. The Prophecy ended in the Israelites with the death/ascension of Jesus Christ bringing an end to the state and authority of Israel. The city and the temple at Jerusalem were destroyed and most of the Jews massacred while the survivors were dispersed throughout the world. These events destroyed not only the central sanctuary but also the centre of the religious teachings and training of the Israelites. The vacuum was filled by certain theologians like St. Paul and his followers who felt free to introduce new faith contrasting with the monotheist teachings of Jesus Christ and all prophets before him. Only a minority among the true followers of Jesus Christ survived in the east but by the end of 6th century, even the survivors were at the point of extinction when the almighty Allah chose the descendants of Abraham from the line of the Ishmaelites who were bestowed by the Lord with the promised Prophet and the last, final and everlasting covenant of the Lord with mankind. As such, the Last *Ummah* i.e. the Muslims proceed from the descendants/followers of Ishmael. We recall that Ishmael was the answer to the long outstanding and repeated prayers of his father and had, therefore, the unique privilege of being the first-born of Abraham, dedicated to the House of the Lord. **No human being before Him was ever dedicated to the Lord** and subsequently, all the Levites and the priests throughout the world followed his tradition of serving at the House of the Lord being dedicated to Him. Ishmael was sent, along with his mother, during his suckling period, to the House of God

at Makkah. It is believed that his mother had died at Makkah when Ishmael was just 15 years old. Being all alone, Ishmael had to marry soon after the death of his mother. He was the first person in the recorded history of faith; who was especially foretold and blessed by God with 12 princes as his descendants who were **the first to found 12 tribes possessing power and control over vast tracts of land throughout the Arabian Peninsula.**

Ishmael was the only son for whom Abraham had prayed to the Lord for a long time. He was the only son of Abraham who participated with him in the covenant of circumcision. Again, he was the first and the only participant with Abraham while raising the walls of Kaaba at Makkh. He belonged to Lord and due to dedication, he stood separated from the family during his suckling period. Since only Ishmael was eligible for the sacrifice as per law of the Lord, therefore, he was the only victim of sacrifice and a participant in the said sanctifying grace with Abraham. **His teachings and traditions were so well preserved by the Arabs that the Lord did not find any need to send another messenger in Arabia for about 2500 years after Ishmael.** His descendants and followers were not only the first people to form an *Ummah* among the people of the Book but they also had the unique privilege of sticking to his faith for long times. As against this, the Israelites formed an *Ummah* about 600 years after the Ishmaelites and in spite of thousands of prophets sent to them, they failed to depict a whole-hearted submission to the will of the Lord. They had dwelt such an inclination for the traditions and the way of worship of the Egyptians and the Canaanites that most of them had been practicing idolatry by worshiping Baals and other false Gods of the nations around them. The said deviation from the true faith was, therefore, the main reason that the Lord sent thousands of prophets to them to redirect them to the straight path towards Allah. In spite of all this, the Israelites failed miserably in the test and trial which

resulted in transferring of the specter of authority and the Law and the lawgiver from the Jews to the Ishmaelites.

Ishmael died at the age of 137 when his descendants were already in power and they held sway over different trading routes in the Arabian Peninsula including some monopoly over the famous trade route of incense and spices from Yemen to Canaan, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Tyre, Sidon and elsewhere. As such, except for the literacy, the Ishmaelites have always been ahead of the Israelites. We said earlier that due to death of Hagar, Ishmael had to marry at the age of about 16 years. Isaac, being 14 years younger than Ishmael, might have been 2 or three years old at that time. Presuming that Ishmael started procreating when Isaac was just four years old, he had an estimated lead of 140 years against the estimated procreation of Jacob. We are told that Isaac got Esau and Jacob when he was 60 years old. Subsequently, Jacob (Israel) married at the age of 84 years. As such, Jacob married about $60 + 84 - 16 = 128$ years after the marriage of Ishmael. This suggests that the procreation of the Ishmaelites had started about 128 years before the procreation of the Israelites. It means that by the time Jacob had his twelve sons, the Ishmaelites might have been in their fourth or fifth generation forming a multitude.

After their emigration to Egypt, the Israelites remained under slavery and hard labor at the hands of the Egyptians for about 400 years. During the exodus, they spent another 40 years in the wilderness. Subsequently, it was after the conquests of Joshua that the Israelites had their first foot-hold in Canaan. The depravity, the inferiority complex, and the jealousy of Israel against their brethren Ishmaelites and the descendants of Lot as well as Esau have, therefore, found its reaction in the text of the Genesis as we find it today. We, however, observe that except derogatory narrations in the Bible, there is nothing in the history of the region to substantiate those boastful assertions of the Israelites against their competitors. In fact, the Israelites had returned to Canaan as foreigners and had to fight for a foot-hold against all the nations already settled in Canaan

and its surroundings. They have, therefore, tried to establish their prior right on Canaan as a divinely allotted territory on the one hand and on the other, by humiliating or debasing all the other nations including the major faction of the descendants of Abraham i.e. Ishmaelites and also the Edomites and the Midianites etc. Such writings, however, reflect only the self interest of Israel and cannot be taken as the true history of the region. **Their claim of sacrifice of Isaac also aims at moral superiority of Israel over the Ishmaelites merely by putting the name of Isaac in Gen 22:2 which cost nothing to them.** In spite of the said insertion in the Genesis, the commemoration of the sacrifice had never been adopted as a tradition among the Israelites. They believe in appropriating the sanctifying grace without taking any obligation to include the act of Abraham and Isaac in their religious rites. The lip service or insertion of certain words in the Genesis can, therefore, be of no benefit to the Israelites.

SACRIFICE OF ISAAC WOULD BE THE GREATEST EVENT OF ISRAEL

We also know that Isaac was the father of Jacob (Israel). Had Isaac been sacrificed, there would be neither Israel nor any descendants to possess the Promised Land. **The entire existence of Israel depended on the life of Isaac.** He had pivotal position for Israel and his sacrifice would have ended everything at that stage. As such, the spiritual culmination as well as the very existence of Israel hinged on survival of Isaac, God's substitution of lamb, in place of Isaac, would have, therefore, been the greatest event in the history of Israel. Due to its importance, there was no possibility of Israel's neglecting the commemoration of the sacrifice. Mere absence of any such festival to commemorate the sacrifice of Isaac in the Israelites or the Edomites is a sufficient proof that no such event took place

in the life of Isaac. Alternatively, the so-called sacrifice of Isaac could not be taken lightly or as a trifling matter which could be forgotten easily in the traditions of Israel.

THE TRUE VICTIM OF SACRIFICE

We asserted earlier that actual person offered for sacrifice was Ishmael, being the first born of Abraham. He belonged to God; was standing before the House of God at Makkah since his suckling period, and was offered for sacrifice at Makkah on the 10th of Zilhajja. Since then, the sacrifice at Makkah has remained the most fervent festival of Arabia, till the advent of the Holy Prophet at Makkah. After Prophet Muhammad(PBUH), the Muslims throughout the world commemorate the sacrifice of Ishmael on 10th of Zilhajja each year. It is, therefore, mandatory on each Muslim adult who can afford the expenses and finds the possibility of visiting Makkah without fear and hindrance to perform Hajj, at least once during his life. Similarly, it is incumbent on each Muslim adult having a prescribed possession of silver/gold or capital etc to sacrifice a sheep, goat or a camel each year on the 10th of Zil-Hajj to commemorate the sacrifice of Ishmael. Ever since the time of Abraham, Hajj and Sacrifice have always remained the most important and the greatest festivals among the Arab descendants/followers of Ishmael. Consequently, hundreds of millions of sheep, goats, cattle, and camels have been sacrificed in the memory of the said sacrifice in the past, and the practice is likely to continue during all times to come. As against this, the Israelites or the Edomites cannot produce any evidence of even a single sheep ever sacrificed by Jacob, Esau or their descendants to commemorate the sacrifice of Isaac.

Had it been Isaac who was offered for sacrifice, it would have been celebrated as the greatest event in the history of Israel. Instead of the said sacrifice, the most important event in the history of Israel has been their freedom from the slavery in Egypt, which is being commemorated as Passover, the most important rite of the Israelites. The Old Testament refers at least 73 times to the same. Israelites have been celebrating the Passover without any break till

today. An interesting example we find in the case of King Josiah of Judah (640-609) who, in the 19th year of his reign, celebrated the Passover and contributed from his own flocks 30,000 sheep and lambs, young goats, and 3,000 bulls for the use of the people for the Passover. Officials in charge of the temple and high priest also gave 2,600 lambs / goats and 300 bulls. The leaders of the Levites also contributed 5,000 lambs / goats and 500 bulls for the Levites to offer the sacrifices (2Ch 35:7-9). All such and many other sacrifices were made annually only because those events belonged to the Israelites, and they were obliged to commemorate the same. It is, therefore, evident from the above that either the sacrifice of Isaac was of no significance to the Israelites and the Edomites or that Isaac had not been the victim of the sacrifice. Being the ancestor of the Israelites, we cannot doubt the importance of Isaac. Had he been the victim of Sacrifice, there could have been no other event more important for the Israelites than the sacrifice of Isaac. Hence, the cause for non-existence of the ritual in the Israelites can be nothing except that Isaac had never been the victim of the sacrifice.

The Passover meal, the festival of unleavened bread and the festival of shelters all are celebrated to remember the great work of God to save people of Israel from the slavery in Egypt. God reminded the people of Israel again and again throughout the Old Testament of His grace in freeing the people of Israel. On the other hand, **God never reminded them of his blessings pertaining to the sacrifice of Isaac anywhere in the Old Testament.** Jacob, Moses, and Joshua did not talk of Isaac's sacrifice nor any prophet of Israel including David, Solomon, Elia, Elesha or Jesus. The non-existence of any reference to Isaac's sacrifice in the history / literature and the normal ritual practices of Israel confirm that the said sacrifice did not pertain to Isaac at all.

We observe that after insertion of the name of Isaac in Gen. 22, Paul was the first person to catch at a straw and use it as a base for his lofty structure of the so-called sacrifice of Jesus, bearing the burden of all the sins in the world to emancipate the mankind from the same. The sacrifice of Isaac was, therefore, a necessary basis to construct thereon the theory of the saving sacrifice of Jesus. Necessity to use it as precursor of the crucifixion of Jesus was, therefore, the only evidence to testify the sacrifice of Isaac. There is nothing else in the Bible or in the history of Faith to substantiate the claim of sacrifice of Isaac which stands refuted due to the potent internal evidence of the Bible as well as the history of Israel to negate it.

Under the circumstances stated above, we conclude that the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen. 22 is simply a distortion of the narration relating to Ishmael. The word 'Isaac' has been inserted in the text in place of Ishmael after the words 'thine only son' in Gen. 22:2. **The term 'thine only son' stands as a conclusive proof of the sacrifice of Ishmael instead of Isaac who had never been the only son or even the first-born of Abraham.** It seems that the scribes failed to remove the words 'thine only son' from Gen. 22:2 due to its repetition in Gen. 22:12 and Gen. 22:16. This was so because the scribes did not find it convenient to obliterate 'thine only son' from three different places in the text. Anyhow, **Isaac and 'thine only son' contradict each other** and are also inconsistent with the other narrations of chapters 12 to 22 of the Genesis taken as a whole. **We, therefore, conclude that it was Ishmael who was offered for the sacrifice, and the name of Isaac has been dishonestly inserted in Gen. 22:2.**

COMMEMORATION OF TRADITIONS; A MUST FOR ISRAEL

From the perusal of the Old Testament, we learn that the Israelites never ignored any important event pertaining to

the ancestors or the passed history of their tribe. Hence, aside from the Passover, they commemorated festival of the Unleavened Bread, Harvest Festival, New Year Festival, Festival of Shelters and also the Day of Atonement. Offerings to God had also been described elaborately. Details about construction of the tent of Lord's presence, its craftsmanship along with all types of services have been recorded in the Pentateuch. The Lord God did not forget even to suggest the minutest details pertaining to the Garments of the Priests, setup of the tabernacle and offerings such as the sacrifice burnt whole, grain offering, fellowship offering, offering for unintentional sin, repayment offering etc. What the Lord God possibly forgot to remind the Israelites was the commemoration of the sacrifice of Isaac with all its rites. This was so because neither Isaac nor his descendants i.e. the Israelites and the Edomites had offered even a single Goat to commemorate the well acclaimed sacrifice of Isaac. Hence, it found no place among the sacrifices, the festivals and the rituals ordained by the Lord and implemented by Moses and the prophets of Israel. We, however, observe that the Israelites have always been fond of commemorating all the events of their history including those for which they had neither any commandment of the Lord nor any instructions from Moses or the prophets. Two instances from the history of Israel may suffice to elucidate the point.

1. Jeptha's Daughter

We read that when the Ammonites went to war against the Israelites in Gilead, they contacted Jeptha, a brave mercenary soldier to lead Israelites in the war (Jud. 11:1). The said Jeptha was the son of a prostitute. During the battle, Jeptha promised to the Lord that:-

"If you give me victory over the Ammonites, I will burn as an offering the first person who comes out of my house to meet me when I come back from the victory. I will offer that person to you as a sacrifice". (Jud. 11:30-31 GNB)

Eventually, when Jeptha returned home to Mizpah, after defeating the Ammonites, there was his daughter coming out to meet him. She was his only child and was, perhaps, born of some harlot. Jeptha's daughter consented to be sacrificed on the condition recorded hereunder:

"And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows". (Judg 11:37 KJV)

The prayer was allowed. It has been reported that:

"And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year". (Judg. 11:39-40 KJV)

It was during the period of the Judges that in about 1127, Jeptha, the son of Gilead delivered Israel from the Ammonites and judged Israel for six years. Jeptha and his daughter were both born of the prostitutes / harlots. It is worth-noting here firstly that God does not require or even permit human sacrifice of any kind. Secondly, that He loftily ignores the sacrifice of a female of any species; human or animal. Thirdly, some writers doubt even the modesty of the only daughter of Jeptha. Since, only she lived with Jeptha in his house, therefore, the writers think that Jeptha knew before-hand who would be the first to come out of his house to greet him. Was it so, that Jeptha planned intentionally to get rid of his daughter due to some reasons that remain to be explained? Anyhow, ignoring for the moment the reasons leading to the sacrifice of the daughter of Jeptha, we find that the event was of such an importance to the Israelites that the daughters of Israel lamented the same every year. **It continued to be commemorated simply because the event belonged to the Israelites.**

As compared with the ignoble and illegitimate daughter of Jeptha, Isaac was a great Prophet born of the noblest parents in the world. He also happened to be the primogenitor of the Israelites as well as the Edomites. Had he been sacrificed, there could have been no Israelites or

the Edomites to possess the land promised to the descendants of Isaac. The acceptance of sacrifice and his substitution with a lamb must, therefore, be reckoned as the greatest event in the history of Israel. In such a case, the commemoration of the sacrifice of Isaac would have been the most meritorious and important ritual rite in the lives of the Israelites. As compared with the same, the Passover would have been an event of much lesser importance. The total absence of the commemoration of the tradition of sacrifice of Isaac from the history and the traditions of Israel is, therefore, the conclusive proof of the fact that Isaac had never been the victim of the sacrifice.

2. Purim

As already mentioned elsewhere, during the reign of Atraxerxes II or Xerxes, the queen Eshther of Jewish origin prevented massacre of the Jews prompted by Vizier Haman.

A Jewish festival is celebrated during the 13-15th days of the month of 'Adar'. "On this occasion, the book of Esther is read, and traditionally the congregation in the synagogue shouts and boos whenever the name of Haman is mentioned. The book of Esther gives the origin of the festival. ('Purim': *The New Bible Dictionary*, Intervarsity Fellowship, London)

Can we quote anything from the Old Testament; from the history or practice of Israel to the effect that sacrifice of Isaac has ever been commemorated practically or merely by reciting its narrative in the annual congregation of Israel? Alternatively, finding no trace of any such tradition, we cannot avoid the inescapable conclusion that the tradition did not pertain to Isaac or to the Israelites.

HISTORY AND THE TRADITIONS

We observe that God Himself gave very detailed guidance about the laws, the priests, their duties, dresses, minute details of the Tabernacle, and other rituals pertaining to worship as well as day to day life of Israel. God also gave the regulations for proclaiming the festivals at the appointed times. He advised them to observe Sabbath as a day of rest and worship. God also instructed them:

"In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: **seven days ye must eat unleavened bread**". (Lev 23:5-6 KJV)

The Passover has such an importance in the history of Israel that it is mentioned at least 73 times in the Bible. It is so, because it commemorates Israel's freedom from the hands of Egyptians when God passed over the houses of the Israelites, while he killed all the first born of the Egyptians. In addition to the above, the Israelites had to observe the **harvest festival, the new moon festival, new year festival, day of atonement, food offering, burnt offering, grain offering, sacrifices and the wine offering. About the festival of shelters or Tabernacles**, we read as under:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. (Lev 23:33-36 KJV)

About the said festival, it is further elaborated as under:

Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: **That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths**, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev 23:42-43)

The same verses have been rendered by the GNB as under:

All the people of Israel shall live in shelters for seven days, **so that your descendants may know** that the Lord made the people of Israel live in simple shelters when He led them out of Egypt. (Lev 23:42-43 GNB)

Assuming that Isaac was the actual victim of the Sacrifice, it would have been a matter of such importance that even the Lord God would have made the commemoration of the same mandatory on the descendants of Isaac. Since no such law, tradition or ritual exists in the Israelites, therefore, their claim about the sacrifice of Isaac is a mere falsehood. As against the Israelites, the commemoration of sacrifice of Ishmael had always been the greatest annual event for the Arabs even before the advent of Islam. Subsequently, since the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it is mandatory for all the Muslims of the world to commemorate the event of sacrifice of Ishmael on 10th of Zil-Hajj and hundreds of millions of animals are sacrificed on the event each year. Similarly, Millions of the pilgrims from all over the world visit Makkah for Hajj and sacrifice there.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is an established fact that all the nations of the world follow the traditions of their forefathers and no nation has ever adopted traditions belonging to others. History of a particular nation and unbroken traditions since thousands of years, therefore, proves the existence or veracity of any episode in the past. The most important reason for the success of Christianity in the Roman Empire was mainly due to the fact that St. Paul had presented the faith that was harmonious to the mythology, the traditions and the cult of the Greeks and the Romans. The impact of the traditions of the Old is visible in the lives of the western nations even today. It is said that the Britishers don't have a formally written constitution. Traditions of the past are the guiding factor for their law. It is only the Israelites who

resort to the falsehood that sacrifice pertained to Isaac but in spite of their claim, they have not been able to own it as a living tradition in the cult of Israel. **Except Gen. 22:2, we do not find any other reference in the Old Testament about the sacrifice of Isaac.** One does not even find the last echo of the tradition relating to the sacrifice of Isaac anywhere in the cult of the Jews. There is also no mention of the place of sacrifice which Abraham called "Jehwey-Jireh". The Israelites can neither identify the place nor has there been any mount known with the name of Moriah even upto the crucifixion of Jesus Christ or centuries thereafter. Similarly, the land of Moriah also finds no reference in the Bible after Gen. 22:2 nor it can be located anywhere in Canaan.

From the study of the Bible and the Islamic traditions, it stands proved and admitted that Ishmael was the first born of Abraham and he was the only son of Abraham till the birth of Isaac. This establishes that Isaac has never been the first born nor the only son of Abraham. As such, it cannot be imagined that God will issue any commandment contradicting His everlasting law or His repeated promises with Abraham to give him descendants through Isaac to hold the land of Canaan forever. All this and the detailed evidence given earlier, knocks bottom out of the fabricated story pertaining to the sacrifice of Isaac in the land of Moriah. Factually, Ishmael was the first born of Abraham and being dedicated to the Lord, was the actual person offered for the sacrifice.

No sane person can deny the fact that the Ishmaelites and the Arabs have been commemorating the traditions of Hazrat Abraham i.e. the Hajj and the sacrifice of Ishmael, on the 9th and 10th of Zilhajj continuously each year. Subsequently, the Muslims followed the traditions of Abraham and celebrated the said festivities throughout the world at their respective localities every year. Millions of pilgrims, however, go to the original site i.e. Makkah, making it not only **the greatest festival of the Muslims** but also the greatest festival of the Human beings gathering there from all parts of the world. This, too,

perhaps is the greatest living proof that Abraham made the said sacrifice at Makkah where it is being remembered with the ever increasing fervor till date.

A continuous and unbroken tradition of sacrifices of billions of animals, sheep and goats, by the Arabs and the Muslims, during the last 3,800 years in commemoration of the said sacrifice, is **the greatest and living proof that Abraham sacrificed Ishmael at Makkah in accordance with the commandment of God**. The said living tradition of sacrifice in the Ishmaelites and its absence in the Israelites, therefore, refutes the claim of the Israelites that Isaac was the son of Abraham offered for the sacrifice. Such a claim also alludes to the habit of the Israelites to inherit all blessings while denying obligation ensuing from the same. They, therefore, claim blessings pertaining to the sacrifice of Isaac only through the word of their mouth but have always tried to avoid in their lives to follow the said tradition of sacrifice, which only could be the true source of the blessings for them. The reasons and the evidence given herein-above leave no other option with the Israelites except to concede to the fact that Abraham offered Ishmael and no one except Ishmael as an oblation to Lord.

WHO WAS SACRIFICED: ISLAMIC VERSION

The Background

Before coming to the actual discussion on the subject in accordance with the Islamic traditions and belief, it will be useful to refresh ourselves with the background of the Israelites who claim that it was Isaac whom Abraham had offered for a sacrifice. We have already examined the said claim existing in the Genesis and arrived at the conclusion that the said assertion cannot be substantiated by facts. In

the present context, we shall attempt to evaluate reasons in favor of the sacrifice of Ishmael from the view point of the Muslims. For this purpose, we start with an appraisal of the characters involved in the episode. As a next step, we shall try to ascertain as to what is being contested and why? Why the issue is being contested and with what motives behind the same? To establish the truth, we shall have to cover each aspect of the study briefly to equip ourselves adequately for a better perception of the facts in the light of historical, traditional, circumstantial, and scriptural evidence available on the issue.

As discussed earlier, there is a world of difference between the thinking and faith of the Muslims as compared with the faith and the ethos of the Israelites. Islamic traditions tell us that **there is one and the only God of the universe who is an unchanging God and there is no God except Him.** Consequently, the message sent through all the prophets of God to different nations has essentially been the same in its basic principles and contents.

"Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace Guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guided whom He will to a path that is straight. (Al-Qur'an 2:213)

The religion of God had always been one and the same which according to the Qur'an was Islam (surrender to the will of God), and Prophet Abraham was the first person to name himself and his followers as Muslims. While directing the Muslims to strive in the cause of the Almighty, God revealed that:-

وَجَاهُهُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقًّا جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَا كُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ
مَّلَةً أَيْكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَاعُهُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَفِي هَذَا لَيَكُونُ الرَّسُولُ
شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَتُوا الزَّكَةَ

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَانَا كُمْ فَيَعْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنُ وَنَعْمَ الْتَّصْبِيرُ

And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; **it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims**, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to Allah! He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help! (Al-Quran: [Al-Hajj] 22:78)

A true Muslim is, therefore, he who surrenders himself completely to the will of the God and strives to obey all His commandments such as establishing regular prayers, giving charity, and holding fast to Allah. To seek the pleasure of God, is the greatest objective of the life of a Muslim, and everything else is subservient to the said cause.

'Islam' also means peace, and peace cannot be attained without creating a harmony between mankind. This requires universal brotherhood of man based on love, affection and unity among all the people of the world. Such unity cannot be established without unity of faith in one and the only Lord God of the universe. All prophets including Abraham, therefore, preached a universal brotherhood on the basis of unity of mankind, worshiping the same God of the universe. The Qur'an tells us that God has been sending His prophets to each and every nation in the world during all the times in the history of man. Allah, therefore, revealed to the Holy Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم), that:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ يَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ اَوَّلَىٰ وَنِيَّةً اَوْ إِنَّمَا مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَفَ فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and **there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them** (in the past). (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Fatir] 35: 24)

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِدٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ

هَادِ

And the Unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" But thou art truly a warner, and **to every people a guide.** (Al-Qur'an: [Ar-Rad] 13:7)

These verses confirm that Almighty Allah sent a guide to each and every nation in the world so that people may not say that they did not receive a Warner to guide them to the straight path and to save them from the perdition. As regards the Jews and the Christians, the Almighty revealed that:

**وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُوَكَا أَوْ نَصَارَى عَنْتُلُوا قُلْ بِكُلِّ مِلْكَةٍ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ**

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.**" (Al-Quran: [Al-Baqara] 2:135)

It is further revealed that:

**قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزَلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزَلَ إِلَيْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ
وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رِزْقِهِمْ لَا
نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَلَنَحْنُ لَهُمُ الْمُسْلِمُونَ**

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-Quran: [Al-Baqara] 2:136)

Since God sent true prophets to all the people, therefore, Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) told the Muslims to believe in all of them, without differentiating one from the other as God ordained in the Quran:

**آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رِزْقِهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُلُّهُمْ
وَرَسُولُهُ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطْعَنَا غُفرَانَكَ رَبِّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ**

الْمُصَيْرُ

"The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys." (Al-Qur'an: 2:285)

In spite of the fact that all the true prophets of the Lord had been endowed with the same essential message from the Lord and they all had been righteous, yet the Lord God exalted some of them in degrees over others.

"Those messengers We endowed with gifts, some above others: To one of them Allah spoke; others He raised to degrees (of honour); to Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (Signs), and strengthened him with the holy spirit. If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after clear (Signs) had come to them, but they (chose) to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting. If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but Allah Fulfilleth His plan." (Al-Qur'an 2:253)

Since the Muslims are obliged to submit to the commandments of the Lord wholeheartedly, therefore, they venerate all the prophets of God irrespective of the fact to which period or nation they belong. The Muslims have no prejudices against any of the prophets of God because they believe that each one of the prophets was the messenger of the same God and preached the same true faith in God i.e. Islam to all the people of the world. Majority of the mankind, however, during different periods of time, disobeyed the prophets who were sent to them. Over a period of time, the succeeding generations of those people either forgot the message or they transmitted the same to others in a corrupted form. Some of the people adopted the ways in accordance with their own wishes and their self interest due to which God had been reviving his message by sending new prophets to the respective nations. Except Noah and Abraham, most of the prophets were assigned a domain limited in time, space, and society. As such, most

of the prophets were responsible mainly to preach the word of God in a particular community and to guide their people towards righteousness in accordance with the commandments of the Lord. Prophet Abraham's responsibility, however, extended to the whole world, and God appointed him the leader of all the people living on Earth. God, therefore, said about him:

وَإِذْ أَبْعَدَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبِّهُ بِكَلْبَاتٍ فَأَتَمْهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ
وَمَنْ ذُرَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنْأُلُ 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: [Al-Baqara] 2:124)

In the aforesaid verses, one must take note of two important points:

(1) Sacrifice a Test & Trial for Abraham

God tested Abraham with certain commandments and when he fulfilled the same, God promised to reward him by making him the Imam (i.e. guide and leader) of mankind. As against the all encompassing leadership of Abraham for mankind, the Genesis restricts the covenant and the mission of Abraham only within the seed of Abraham as quoted below:

"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; **for a father of many nations have I made thee.** And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. **And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee** in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to **thy seed after thee.** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. (Gen 17:2-8 KJV)

According to Genesis, therefore, God's promise was with Abraham and his seed after him. The said passage does not restrict the covenant to the Israelites or to the descendants of Sarah alone. All Abraham's sons through Sarah, Hagar, Keturah and Hajune were undoubtedly seed of Abraham. Hence, even according to the verses quoted above God's covenant and blessings extended to all the descendants of Abraham.

In contrast to the above, the second part of verse 17:19 i.e. "*I will establish my covenant with him (Isaac) for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.*" constricts the all encompassing promise of the Lord only to Isaac, therefore, the same can be identified as an interpolation in the text. We also cannot rely upon the same because it contradicts the verses Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 17:2-8 which included all progeny of Abraham. Besides this, the God said:-

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Gen 22:18 KJV)

This confirms that the blessings as a reward to Abraham for obeying the voice of the Lord extended to all his descendants. Hence, restricting the same only to the descendants of Isaac is an obvious distortion made by the Israelites. It is also worth noting here that the blessings ensued from Abraham's obedience to the commandments of the Lord. This has a subtle suggestion that those who disobey the commandments of the Lord were not eligible for the blessings promised to Abraham.

(2) Promise of Blessings Did Not Cover the Evil-Doers

The second part of the verse 2:124 of the Qur'an, quoted earlier, tells us that when Abraham requested God for a similar leadership for his descendants, the Lord told him clearly that "**But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.**"

From the above, we understand that God made a clear-cut distinction between the righteous and the evil-doers among the progeny of Abraham, and He excluded the evil-doers from the said blessings, irrespective of the fact that they were the genuine descendants of Abraham. This shows that God did not differentiate the people on the basis of their blood, ethnicity, language, region, time, or anything else. The basis of blessing was righteousness, and nothing else. On the other hand, the Israelites, instead of excluding the evil-doers, excluded all the descendants of Abraham from the overall blessings of the Lord, restricting the same exclusively to the descendants of Jacob. As against this, God's word in the Qur'an has differentiated the descendants of Abraham on the basis of their evil-doings or righteousness. No discrimination has been made on the basis of their descent from Ishmael, Isaac, or the other sons of Abraham through his wife Keturah and Hajun. This shows that God does not have any blood relations with any of his creatures. His relation with humanity is that of the creator and His creatures. Whosoever among His slaves loves Him and strives wholeheartedly to obey all His commandments, deserves His mercy and blessings. Those who disregard the law, rebel against the Lord, and resort to evil-doing, are not only excluded from the mercy and protection of the Lord but also earn perdition for their infidelity and evil deeds. No blood relation can save the sinful from retribution for his sin or the evil-doings.

The Lord God, therefore, warned the mankind to fear Him. He said:

"O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you." (Al-Qur'an, 4:1)

Since all human beings descended from one pair, therefore, no differentiation can be made on the basis of their ancestry. All the people must, however, fear the Lord and obey His commandments because He is 'All-Watcher over them'. The Israelites, therefore, enjoy no exemption on the

basis of being the descendants of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. God revealed to Moses that:-

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exo 19:5)

Subsequently, when the Israelites disobeyed the Lord and complained against him, the Lord announced the punishment and inflicted the same as detailed in Num 14:28-38. To further elucidate the point, the Qur'an has referred to similar transgressions of the Israelites (4:22-26) and also by quoting the instance of Cain and Abel (both sons of Adam and Eve) to clarify the basis of differentiation of one from the other. God said:-

"Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! They each presented a sacrifice (to Allah): It was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: "Be sure, I will slay thee." "Surely," said the former, "**Allah doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous**" (Al-Qur'an, 5:27)

Such an impartiality and justice of the Lord was not acceptable to the Israelites who desired to assert their superiority over others. The Israeli writers, therefore, resorted to making interpolations in the Old Testament to the effect that the blessings, promised to all the descendants of Abraham, have been restricted firstly to the descendants of Isaac and then to the descendants of Jacob e.g.:

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and **I will establish my covenant with him (Isaac) for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.** (Gen 17:18-19 KJV)

We said earlier that the second part of verse 19, quoted above, can be identified as a spurious addition in the text not only because they conflict with Gen 12:23 and Gen 17:2-8 but also because the Lord **never established any such covenant with Isaac**. We must also keep in mind that the promise of God as per the Quran ("But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.") establishes the

universal principle of justice, while the interpolation as above, is based on ethnicity and prejudice of Israel against all other descendants of Abraham. The same priorities of the Israelites are apparent from the history and national literature of the Israelites. **One can, therefore, easily understand the basis on which the name of Isaac has been inserted into the Genesis 22:2 in place of Ishmael who had been the lawful and the actual victim of the sacrifice.**

In spite of the fact that there are numerous verses in the Old Testament, confirming repeatedly that the Israelites had been evil-doers; they are not going to accept the verdict of God that the evil-doers will lose the privilege of leading (امامت) people towards the Lord. The Lord, however, did not desert the evil-doers among the Israelites and for a long period of their history, He continued to send thousands of prophets to retrieve them but being a stubborn nation, they never responded to the call of the God in a positive manner. The long line of those venerable prophets of God ended at last in John, the Baptist, and Jesus, the Christ. The Israelites did not receive even the said prophets properly. Their denial of the said prophets became an ultimate proof of their obstinacy and rebellion against the Lord. The rejection of the prophets was, therefore, the turning point of the history of Israel after which no prophet had ever been raised up from among them. **Assassination of John and Jesus was, therefore, the final evidence against the Israelites confirming their inability to receive the promised Prophet with the new covenant of the Lord.** The prophecy of Jacob was, therefore, fulfilled with the advent of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Arabia. The Lawgiver and 'the Sceptre' departed from the descendants of Judah to the descendants of Ishmael as predicted by 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)

In addition to the above, we also recall the prophecy of Moses as under:

"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; According to all that thou desirest 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. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. **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. 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 18:15-19 KJV)

The above prophecy of Moses may be read with the following departing blessings of Moses to Israel:

"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)

It is needless to reiterate that according to the Genesis, Paran was the wilderness where Isaac and Hagar lived after their separation from Abraham and the Lawgiver was destined to shine forth from mount Paran accompanied by ten thousands of saints.

The warning of Jesus to Israel also suggests the same:-

42. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? **43.** 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 21:42-43 KJV)

It is pertinent to note here that the Kingdom of God is established only when the people accept the Lord God as the supreme ruler over the people and submit to the commandments of the Lord in all aspects of their lives. The worldly kings, if any, were slaves of God who were duty-bound to obey the Lord and to enforce the Law of the Lord in the community. The King, the community and all acts and deeds of the people were, therefore, subservient to the commandments of the Lord. No one was above law nor

could anyone change the same. It was only St. Paul of Tarsus who being sponsored by the Romans suggested to abrogate the Law of Moses while advising his followers to submit wholeheartedly to the law enforced by the state authorities i.e. the Romans (Rom 13:1-7). Since no Christian nation ever enforced the Law of God, therefore, the kingdom of God was not established anywhere in the Christian world although they continue to propagate the same. Man-made law always prevailed in the Christian states. As against this, **it was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through whom the Lord God established the Kingdom of God on earth.** Since then, the same law of God has been the basis of all other laws in the countries of the Muslims. Hence, the kingdom of God shifted from the Israelites to the Muslims while the Christians have mostly been ruling their states in accordance with the Law of Romans, Greeks and others.

Although upto the advent of Jesus, the Israelites had already concealed or obliterated most of the predictions in the Old Testament, yet somehow certain verses survived in the Old Testament foretelling about the advent of Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) with an advice to Israelites to hearken to the said Prophet. It was, however, the ethnicity and prejudice of the Israelites that they refused to accept Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) as the last and the final Prophet of the God, sent to all the nations of the world. The national prejudices of Israel did not tolerate the proliferation of the blessings of the Almighty to all the nations of the world through Ishmael and other sons of Abraham. They had already made themselves the only descendants of Abraham through Isaac and his grandson Jacob. As such, they refused to accept the descendants of Ishmael and other sons of Abraham through his wife Keturah and Hajune as the legitimate progeny of Abraham. They cannot accept that any grace, glory, or blessing from the God may be bestowed on the Ishmaelites and other descendants of Abraham. Consequently, **they pay no regard to the Scripture that God had promised to bless all nations of the world through the descendants of Abraham.** In spite of the fact that the

Israelites knew full well that they stood deprived of the blessings of God due to their evil deeds, yet they stubbornly continued to assert the same as a birth right of Israel. The said haughtiness and prejudice of Israel has been the main hindrance in their accepting Ishmael as the first born of Abraham and the only son offered for sacrifice. Similarly, they reject the Holy Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) on the same grounds ignoring the irrefutable and clear-cut prophecies in the Old Testament foretelling unambiguously the advent of a Prophet like Moses among the brethren of Israel i.e. the Ishmaelites. This ethnocentric attitude and bias of the Israelites against others have always been evident from the national literature of the Israelites in the past and we find them obsessed with the same disposition till today.

During the ancient period extending over 1400 years from Moses to Jesus, it had become a conviction of the Israelites that there could be no salvation outside Israel. A genuine prophet must, therefore, be an Israelite. Any prophet who did not fulfill the prerequisite of being an Israelite was not acceptable to them. In the post-exilic period, it became an article of faith that there could be no genuine prophet outside Judea and Jerusalem. Jesus, too, was unacceptable to the people of Judea because he was from Galilee and it was said "can anything good come out of Galilee". A non-Israelite or a non-Judean prophet was, therefore, disqualified, denied, and condemned merely on the aforesaid grounds. Another reason leading to the denial had been preachings of the prophets who admonished Israel to abstain from their evil-doings. They also could not relish the teachings exhorting the Israelites to submit to the will of the Lord. Since the teachings of John (the Baptist) and Jesus were against the prevailing taste of the masses and especially against the hypocrite priestly class, the life style as well as worldly privileges of the ruling classes, therefore, they found it expedient to eliminate both of them.

LITERATE VS. THE FORBEARING

Another great difference between the Israelites and the Arabs or Ishmaelites was in the fact that the former were the literate people while the Arabs were (أُمّى) i.e. the illiterates. The differentiation can, perhaps, be traced back to the time of Abraham when God promised to bless him; firstly with a son whom God defined as follows:

فَبَشِّرْ كَاهْ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ

So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. (Al-Quran) [As-Saaffat] 37:101

The first born was, no doubt, Ishmael who was ready to suffer and forebear. As compared with this, the glad tidings about the second son i.e. Isaac contains the following words:

قَالُوا لَا تَوْجُلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ

They said: "Fear not! We give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom." (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Hijr] 15:53)

We, therefore, observe that the descendants of Ishmael i.e. the Arabs had always been distinct for their forbearance. The Israelites, on the other hand, inherited learning from Isaac the 'غلام عليه' i.e. the son endowed with wisdom.

The said distinctive features have always differentiated the Ishmaelites from the Israelites till the advent of Islam. While the Israelites have always been proud of their learning, the Arabs had been conspicuous in their forbearance and hospitality to the strangers. So far as learning was concerned, the Arabs were mostly unlettered people but ultimately, the Lord God raised among them the greatest and the final teacher and Prophet of the Lord to teach the wisdom and the Book to the Ummies (the illiterates) who soon thereafter became a beacon of light for the entire world. Anyhow, the Israelites also managed to retain the quality of learning in them and even today they

excel other people in science, technology, and other fields of knowledge. In spite of abundance of the knowledge, teachings and traditions of the Lord, they failed to get rid of their ethnicity and priorities for the worldly benefits for the Israelites. Their history is the evidence to the fact that whenever they found anything distasteful to them, they not only complained against the Lord and the prophets but also rebelled against them. We, therefore, observe that the Israelites did not submit themselves to the will of God during any period of their history. Instead of bowing to the commandments of the Lord, they concealed the true contents of the revelation and corrupted the same by self-made additions in the Holy Book.

The Israelites never had any doubt that the غلام حلیم (i.e. Ishmael) was the first born of Abraham and only he belonged to God. Due to his dedication to the Lord, he was not entitled to receive anything as inheritance from his father. We also note that separation from the family on that account was tradition of Ishmael left for future generations and the Lord God confirmed the same as the Law for the Israelites. The Israelites were not, therefore, unaware of the fact that being dedicated to the Lord, Ishmael was sent to Makkah since his suckling period. Throughout his life, he stood before the Lord as the first priest from among the mankind at the house of God anywhere in the world. Due to his dedication to the Lord, he renounced his share in the inheritance from Abraham while he or his descendants never claimed the same. Ishmael lived in isolation in the wilderness and as soon as Abraham disclosed to him about the vision of his sacrifice, he immediately submitted himself to the will of the Lord. **All such traits demonstrate the ideal eligibility of Ishmael for the sacrifice and no one else could compete with him in his qualities as the son ready to suffer and forbear in the way of God.**

Isaac, on the other hand, remained domesticated for about 75 years under direct supervision of Abraham who had been an illustrious and learned personality of his time. The said quality of Abraham has already been highlighted by us

in our paper '*The Life and Time of Abraham*'. It was, therefore, natural for Isaac to learn faith and wisdom from his father including the art of reading and writing. Even after the death of Abraham, Isaac remained well settled as a rich and resourceful Shaykh and a prophet in Canaan for another 105 years. In view of this, **we are not inclined to agree with the narrative of Isaac in the Genesis which shows him as passive, colorless, feminine and almost decrypt person who remained blind and bedridden during the last part of his life.** Similarly, the Genesis fails to show any spark of life in Jacob except that he was a cheater, a liar and a timid as well as a terrified man. **The Qur'an, however, refutes all such charges against the patriarchs.** It certifies that:-

And commemorate Our Servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
possessors of Power and Vision (38:45)

Besides this, the Qur'an eulogized Isaac and Jacob among the righteous (29:27) *that Isaac was a prophet, one of the righteous* (37:112). The Qur'an also certified Isaac as endowed with wisdom. The said qualities might also have passed on to Jacob and Esau during 70 years of their life under the supervision of Isaac. It is, therefore, natural to assume that Jacob might have transmitted the same to his descendants which helped Joseph to rise to the esteemed position of the governor of Egypt. Consequently, up to the death of Joseph, the Israelites had the best environments to add to their knowledge and wealth in Egypt, but it was in the time of some later king that they were made to work as slaves under the Egyptians which deprived them of reviving the traditions and wisdom of their ancestors.

There is no doubt that Ishmael was the first messenger among the descendants of Abraham. Since Ishmael had to marry in an early age, therefore, it is plausible to assume that he might have begotten all his twelve sons about 40 years before the birth of Esau and Jacob. Many of his sons might be having grown up children by the time Jacob was born. Since the Qur'an had enjoined on Abraham and Ishmael to sanctify the house of the Lord for those who compass around it or use it as a retreat, bow or prostrate

there in prayer (Al-Qur'an 2:125), therefore, Ishmael must have fulfilled his engagements towards the Lord. Ishmael was both a messenger and a prophet of the Lord (Al-Qur'an 19:54). The Lord certified that

"He used to enjoin on his people Prayer and Charity, and he was most acceptable in the sight of his Lord." (Al-Qur'an 19:55)

The verses of the Qur'an quoted above suggest unbroken continuity of the preachings of Abraham through Ishmael and his sons who all might have been groomed by Abraham by himself. The covenant was formalized at Makkah and the earliest community of the Muslim followers of Abraham was established at Makkah much before the birth of Jacob (Israel). The teachings and traditions of Abraham might have become deep rooted in the successors and followers of Abraham there which is also evident due to the existence of many such traditions even up to the time of the advent of the holy prophet. As a result of the same, most of the Arabs acknowledged Allah as Lord God of the universe. It was about 500 years after Ishmael that the younger branch among the descendants of Abraham i.e. Bani Israel were chosen for test and trial by the Lord. God, therefore, entrusted them with the covenant (law) and also exalted them above other nations of the world by raising up from among them thousands of prophets in between Jacob and Jesus. Their superiority or distinction was based on the law of the Lord and the prophets sent to them. God, therefore, reminded them of his bounty in the following words:

يَا تَنِي إِنْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا يَعْبُوتِي الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَلَّتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all other (for My Message). (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Baqara] 2:47)

God also reminded them in the words noted below:

**يَا تَنِي إِنْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا يَعْبُوتِي الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوْفِي
بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَلَا يَأْتِيَ فَارَهُبُونَ**

O Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me. (Al-Qur'an: 2:40)

It is evident from the above that the said blessings also entailed the reciprocal **obligations on the Israelites to perform their part of the covenant with the Lord**. Since the Israelites were the first ones among the descendants of Abraham to be tested and tried with the elaborate covenant of the Lord, therefore, they were obliged to keep the covenant intact, to transmit exact contents to others and to comply with the same meticulously. Alas! The Israelites failed to discharge their obligations under the covenant. History tells us that instead of submission to the will of the Lord. Eventually, due to the said persistence they distorted the text and also transgressed against the commandments of the Lord. Due to the said persistence of the Israelites in the evil ways, the Lord God declared them (*Magdoob* i.e. earning the wrath of God), as we find in in the Qur'an:

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَنَ نَصِيرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُجْرِيْ جَنَانَ بَيْتَ
نُقْبَتِ الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِنَاعِهَا وَفُومَهَا وَعَلَسَهَا وَبَصَلَهَا قَالَ اللَّهُشَّبَّيلُونَ
الَّذِي هُوَ أَكْنَىٰ بِالذِّي هُوَ حَيٌّ أَهْبَطُوا إِمْرَأَ فِيَّنَ لَكُمْ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الرِّلْلَةُ وَالسِّكْنَةُ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ كُلَّكُمْ بِأَثْنَمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحِقْقَةِ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

And remember ye said: "O Moses! we cannot endure one kind of food (always); so beseech thy Lord for us to produce for us of what the earth groweth, -its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, Its garlic, lentils, and onions." He said: "Will ye exchange the better for the worse? Go ye down to any town, and ye shall find what ye want!" **They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah.** This was because they went on rejecting the Signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause. This was because they rebelled and went on transgressing. (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Baqara] 2:61)

The arrogance and rebellious conduct of Israel coupled with the breach of trust through distortion in the divine writ was

the main cause of their being labelled as مخضوب i.e. under the wrath of God. Allah said:

"Ask the Children of Israel how many clear (Signs) We have sent them. But if any one, after Allah's favour has come to him, substitutes (something else), Allah is strict in punishment." (Al-Qur'an 2:211)

The continued and persistent attitude of Israel, as above, resulted ultimately in the transfer of the scepter from Israel to the Ishmaelites, as already foretold by Prophet 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)

Eventually, after the murder of John and crucifixion of Jesus, the Lord God took away the sceptre and the trust law reposed in the Israelites. About 600 years after the death of Jesus the Lord God chose the descendants of Ishmael and the Arabs for the test and trial. No wonder that Prophet Muhammad (صلی الله علیہ وسلم) and his followers proved themselves worthy of the Divine trust by preserving the word of God intact for all mankind for all the times to come. The Prophet himself set an exquisite example in his beautiful pattern (اسوة الحسنة) to be followed by his successors. This ultimately resulted in the formation of an ideal society of human beings on Earth, the like of which had never been seen before nor after the time of the righteous successors to the Prophet. As such, the long-awaited kingdom of God stood ideally established on earth in the Muslim Ummah in and around the Arabian Peninsula.

The period of Exodus and of the Judges was a period of turmoil, yet they always had some priests to read, write, and convey the details of law / rituals and other matters relating to the history and culture of Israel. The golden period of the Israelites was during the reign of King David and Solomon while the period of decline started soon after Solomon which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC when 70,000 of the surviving Israelites were driven away as slaves to Babylonia. The said city was another important center of learning at that time. Many prophetic

writings, appearing in the Old Testament, either pertain to the period of exile or they received the present form during that period. All writings aiming at rekindling the hope in Israelites by the moral uplift of the nation belonged to the post-exilic reforms of the prophets. Most probably, it was the said post-exilic period i.e. between 500 and 300 BC when some enthusiastic writers inserted the name of Isaac in Genesis 22:2 to make him the victim of sacrifice instead of Ishmael.

The elder branch of the progeny of Abraham was the descendants from his first born son Ishmael. They were mostly illiterates and lived as Nomads in the deserts spreading all over Arabia while a few of them remained settled at places like Makkah. Aside from grazing the animals, they became traders holding almost a monopoly over the trade between Yemen, Canaan, Babylonia, Syria, and Egypt. The center of all their religious, commercial, and cultural as well as social activities had always been Makkah where they assembled for Hajj and sacrifice on 9th and 10th of Dhū al-Hijjah every year. They, therefore, kept alive the tradition of sacrifice of Ishmael by Abraham at Makkah throughout 2500 years from the time of Abraham till the advent of Islam without taking any notice that some ingenious Israeli writers had attributed the said sacrifice to Isaac instead of Ishmael. Except for certain settlements of Israel in Medina, Khyber, and Yemen, the Israelites were almost a non entity for most of the Arabs who lived as nomads or had some small settlements in different parts of the wide-spread deserts of Arabia. They grazed their sheep, goats, camels etc. or lived in self-centered, secluded units, having no contact or concern with the Israelites living about

1400 km away from Makkah and other places in the south and eastern parts of Arabia. Majority of the Arabs, therefore, neither knew nor ever felt concerned about the forgeries being made or inserted by the Israelites in the Old Testament. Even if someone noticed the forgery, they were unable to retaliate in writing as transpires from the fact that no book had ever been written in Arabia before the revelation of the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) who dictated the verses of the Qur'an to the scribes to compose the book. The Qur'an took its formal shape as a compact writing or a book around the period of the Muslim conquests of Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile, most of the Muslims had been trying to memorize the entire Qur'an or parts of the same. Aside from this, they also took utmost care to preserve the verbal as well as ritual traditions of the prophet for strict observance of the same. As such, most of the Ishmaelites or the Arabs had neither the time nor a need to conduct any critical study of the contents of the Old Testament nor were they interested to search out for the distortion, misreporting, inexactitude, incompatibilities or various other changes made in the text by the Israelites from time to time.

THE UNBIASED ATTITUDE OF THE MUSLIMS

Jerusalem was taken over by the Muslims in 638 from the Romans and almost entire Roman holdings in the East of Mediterranean Ocean became part of the Muslim Caliphate. The Israelites then were in Diaspora and had no importance or existence as a nation to compete with the Arabs or the Muslims. Further, the Muslims were fully contented with the detailed guidance available in the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. They did not, therefore, need to study the Bible nor did they examine the contents thereof because the Qur'an sufficed to give them all the guidance, they required. The laymen and even scholars among the Muslims had no direct awareness about the contents of the Bible because they concentrated on learning, memorizing, transmitting and understanding the message of the Qur'an for meticulous compliance in their lives.

Since the Muslims believed in all the prophets and the books of the Lord, therefore, they had no prejudice against any of them or the books assigned to their names. In spite of the fact that the Quran and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had made general remarks about the concealments, additions or deletions in the said books, yet most of the Muslims held them next to the Qur'an in reverence. Many of them found the assertions in the Bible useful even for the exposition of the Qur'an and didn't hesitate to quote references from the national literature of the Israelites such as Talmud, Mishna, Gemarah, Kabalah, Targum and other writings of the Israelites while interpreting and explaining certain verses of the Qur'an. It has never been the trend of the Muslims to reject any part of the Bible due to any prejudice or even a discrepancy apparent from the text. Only a few of the Muslim scholars adopted care and caution in utilizing the biblical sources a reference while others reproduced traditions of the Israelites in their writings pertaining to the ancient past. As such, certain scholars among the Muslims took the writing in the Bible for granted and made free use

of their traditions in the exposition of the Qur'an. As such, during the first three centuries of Islam, some new converts from the Jews and the Christians also concocted certain traditions and circulated the same among the Muslims. Such traditions provided the base for some scholars in the said century to opine that it was Isaac who was offered as a sacrifice by Abraham. Among them was Ibne Jareer Tabri who formed the opinion that Issac was the victim of sacrifice. Perhaps, the only reason for his believing in that way was the fact that he found the name of Isaac written explicitly in the Genesis 22:2. He also relied upon certain sayings of certain companions and other notable persons among the Muslims having supported the name of Isaac as the victim of sacrifice. It is, however, known that Ibne Jareer had always been eager to collect maximum information from oral or written traditions and recorded the same without any scrutiny or conclusion based on comparative evaluation for the same. We, therefore, find contradictory assertions jumbled together in his voluminous history leaving it to the reader to decide between the same. His opinion about Isaac might have, therefore, been based on the Genesis 22:2 and some support from traditions ascribed to some companions of the Prophet and their pupils. According to Ibne Jareer, the main source for such tradition was Kaab Ahbaar who had been narrating traditions and stories from the Bible to the companions of the Prophet and others. Possibility of false propagation can also not be ruled out because many of the persons, relied upon by Ibne Jareer, have favored the sacrifice of Ishmael while other sources endorsing the sacrifice of Ishmael are much more authentic than those relied upon by Ibne Jareer.

EARLY JEWISH & CHRISTIAN CONVERTS TO ISLAM

The Bible tells us that since 722 B.C., the Jews had been suffering from various calamities leading to massacre, deportation and dispersal of the Israelites to various regions outside Palestine. Subsequently, during the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, God's anger against Israel was great as reproduced in the following:

"Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia": (2Ch 36:17-20 KJV)

It is further learnt that many surviving Judeans fled to other places around Canaan while some of them settled in Yethrib (Medina) and Khyber in Arabia. There had been many other troubled periods for the Jews, such as, the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Pompeii in about 63 BC, and subsequently the total destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD. Almost all the Jews were expelled from Judea or Palestine; a few of whom again went to different places in Arabia, while some of them went as far as Yemen. Finally, in 130 A.D. Emperor Hadrian brought final ruin and destruction on the city and the state of the Israelites after which Jews were banned to enter the holy land or the city of Jerusalem. The surviving Jews had to take refuge in Diaspora, in different regions outside Palestine. These Jews were expecting the advent of the Prophet as foretold at many places in the Old Testament.

The promised Prophet was commonly referred to as '**that prophet**' to be raised from among the brethren of Israel who was foretold as a **prophet like Moses**. It is said that a small number of the Jews had some idea that Yathrib (Madina) was the Maqam-e-Hijrat (place of refuge) of the said prophet, and he was expected imminently. Subsequently, when Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) started his preaching at Medina, some of the unbiased and God-fearing Jews recognized him immediately and converted themselves to Islam wholeheartedly. These included persons like Abdullah bin Salam, Zaid bin Saana, Makhriq, and others who had the honor to be 'Sahaba' (the companions of the prophet). Large number of the Jews, however, being prepossessed with their pride and racialism, could not tolerate a prophet from any other nation except Israel. They opposed the prophet, and even broke the contract known as Misaq-e-Madina which they had made with him. Such stubborn Jews had been a continuous source of mischief and trouble to the prophet and the Muslims. Eventually, after their expulsion from Medina, most of them migrated to Khyber and continued their hatred and enmity against the Muslims, even after the conquest of Khyber in about 6 Hijra. Eventually, when Islam was accepted by all the Arabs, many Jews and Christians found it expedient to come under the fold of Islam. Most of them embraced Islam faithfully while there had been a minority consisting of the pretenders. Such people never forgot their enmity against Islam and the Prophet. Among the converts were some persons who fabricated certain traditions on the basis of the Bible and tried to circulate the same in the name of the Holy Prophet or some prominent companions of the Prophet. The tradition suggesting Isaac as the victim of Sacrifice seems to have originated from the afore-stated Jewish or Christian converts but most of the Muslim scholars scrutinized and discarded such tradition as fabricated or fake.

During the period of the caliphate of Omar and Uthman, a large number of the Jews, previously belonging to Khyber

and also to Yemen, converted to Islam. One of them was Abu Ishaq Kaab bin Mateh bin Heyssu who was a great Jewish scholar of Yemen and was, therefore, known as **Kaab Ahbar**. It is said that he was:-

"a Yemenite Jew who became a convert to Islam probably in 638 A.D. (Al-Tabri) and is considered the oldest authority on Judaeo-Islamic..... very little is known of this man who according to traditions came to Medina during the Caliphate of Omar b Al-Khattab, accompanied the latter of Jerusalem in 636 A.D. (Al-Tabri) and after his conversion was on intimate terms with the caliph, whose death he predicted 3 days before it took place.....though his true figure is difficult to discern so raged and legendary trappings, Ka'b is considered to have possessed a profound knowledge of the Bible and southern Arabean traditions as well as a personal wisdom attested by the numerous statements attributed to him without argument because he inspired so much confidence (al-Nawawi Tahdhib)..... **sometimes he is accused of introducing Jewish elements into Islam** as example in a story preserved by Tabari (1, 2608-9) in which '**Umar charges Ka'b with judaizing when he treats the temple mount in Jerusalem as a holy place**'....."

Posterity saught to a luster to his name by crediting with a great variety of traditions particularly those relating to the prophet such as the Hadith Dhi' l-Kifl printed a Bulakh in 1283 A.D..... .. or the legend of Joseph in Aljamiado".

*(Ka'b Al-Ahbar, The Encyclopeadea of Islam E.J. Brill, 1991,
Leiden, netherland, Vol 4b p 316-17)*

"The earliest sources of information were either converted Jews or, perhaps, Arabs who had had contracts, before their conversion to Islam, with the Jews and Christians of the Arabian Peninsula and the neighboring regions. Mention may be made of 'Abid/'Ubayd b. Sharya al-Djurhumi (see Ibn Sharya), whose narrations concerning the ancient history of the kings of the Arabs and Persians and Biblical History (the confusion of languages, the dispersal of mankind) were said to have been recorded in writing by order of Mu'awiya, 'Abd Allah b. Salam (q.v.), Ka'b Al-Ahbar (q.v.) and, later, Wahb b. Munabbih (Q.v.); **the last-named is believed to have written a K. al-Mubtada', entitled also Isra'iliyat**; there is no reason to question the authenticity of this belief, and it may be accepted that authors like Ibne-Hisham (d 218/833) made extracts from it

which in turn were passed on to later authors; however, the particular compilations which claim to relate certain traditions of these personages do not offer the smallest guarantee of their authenticity or antiquity, or of their earlier date in relation to the great compositions of *ta'rikh*, *tafsir* and *kisas al-anbiya'* produced from the 3rd/9th to the 5th/11th centuries".

(ISRA'ILIYAT, The Encyclopeadea of Islam E.J. Brill, 1991, Leiden, netherland, Vol 4b p 211-12)

It is said that Kaab had been visiting Madina and also called on the Holy Prophet at various occasions. He showed his inclination towards Islam but did not accept it during the life of the Prophet. There is no general agreement among the scholars about the time of his conversion to Islam. Some people think he accepted Islam during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr or Umar while according to majority, Kaab became a Muslim after the assassination of Umar when Uthman had succeeded to the Caliphate after Umar. According to Ibne Jareer Tabri, Kaab had cordial relations with Umar and when in 17 Hijra i.e. 638 A.D., Umar went to Al-Quds (Jerusalem), he was one of his companions and he accepted Islam during that period. (*Kaab al-Ahbar*, Daira Maaraif-e-Islamia, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Vol 17).

Many scholars also suggest his involvement in the assassination of Umar because he warned him three days before his death. Next day, after the warning he again called on Umar to tell him that only two days were left for him to die. Even on the third day, Kaab told Umar that there was only one day between him and his death. He would be no more after tomorrow morning. Since Umar stood assassinated exactly in accordance with Kaab's foretelling, therefore, it is believed that Kaab had been among those who planned the assassination of Umar (p. 714-716, *UMAR FAROOQ-E-AZAM*, Muhammad Hussain Haikal, Urdu, Maktba-e-Jadeed, Macleod Rd. Lahore 1960).

According to the source quoted above, Kaab had accepted Islam soon after the death of Umar. While residing in Madina, he learnt the Quran and Sunnah (traditions of the prophet) from Umar, Sohaib, Aisha, etc. and also passed on the same to others. It is said that once Kaab was sitting with Abu Huraira who was narrating to him the traditions of the Prophet. while Kaab was narrating to Abu Huraira different stories of the Bible. In this respect it is said that besides Abu Huraria and others, Abdullah Ibn-e-Abbas, the famous expositor of the Qur'an has also been one of the pupils of Kaab to learn the traditions of the Bible from him. Being a great scholar of the Old Testament and other Israeli literature, he used to narrate a lot of it to the companions of the Prophet such as Abu Huraira, Muaviya, and Ibn Abbas. Besides the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), he also used to narrate Israeli traditions to Malik bin Abi Aamir Asbahi, Ata bin Abi Ribah, Abdullah bin Ribah Ansari, Abdullah bin Hamza Saloli, Abu Rafeey, Saigh, Abdul Rahman bin Shuaib, and many others. (Tazhib ul Tahzib vol 5 p 428). Subsequently, Kaab Ahbar went to Hammath and even there he used to substantiate his preaching with Israeli traditions due to which, many people confused such traditions with the sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). As such, Kaab being a great scholar of Torah, became a source of spreading some Israeli traditions among the Muslims which over a period of time got mingled with the true traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) reported under the authority of some of the eminent companions of the Prophet (PBUH). It was in the said background that **some experts of Ahadith (traditions of the prophet) declared Kaab Ahbar unreliable in respect of traditions pertaining to the Prophet (PBUH)**. Anyhow, the stories and traditions narrated by Kaab Ahbar and other Jewish converts had their circulation among the Muslims who took their contents as reliable as long as the same were not refuted by the Quran or other authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). It is said that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman did not depend on the traditions of the Israelites but some others like Abdullah bin Salam, Abdullah bin Amar bin Aas relied upon the same. Some

others like Muqatil bin Sulaiman and Saddi were also among those who utilized traditions of Israel. Meanwhile, scholars took notice of wide spread circulation of certain fake traditions in the name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Ultimately, one Ibne Abi al Auj was punished to death for concocting and spreading fake traditions in Kufa in 772 A.D. Subsequently, some eminent Muslim experts of Hadith such as Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismael Al-Bukhari (810-870 A.D.) and Abu Hussain Muslim bin Hajjaj (817-875 A.D.) and others came forward to scrutinize and verify the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) and prepared their verified collections. Most authentic of such traditions collected separately by six of the most eminent scholars became known as صحاح ستہ i.e. 'the six most authenticated books of the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH)'. The compositions of the said collections brought an end to the circulation or acceptance of fake or non-authenticated traditions among the Muslims.

It was Kaab who said that وفدينه بنجع عظيم denotes Isaac. He said that God had commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Urdu Tareekh-e-Tabri, Vol. 1, p 214). This shows that the said opinion of Kaab must have proliferated even among those companions of the Prophet (PBUH) or early Muslims who happened to learn traditions of the Bible from Kaab. During subsequent transmission to others, such stories narrated by Kaab got confused with genuine traditions transmitted through the same companions of the Prophet. This, therefore, is the main basis for taking Isaac as the victim of sacrifice as also relied upon by Ibne Jareer Tabri.

Aside from Kaab (who died at Hamath in 32 AH, at the age of 140 years) and his companions, there were some other Jewish converts such as **Abdullah bin Saba** and his companions from Yemen, who are believed to be hypocrites and trouble creators for Islam, both by their actions and also by spreading fake (Mauzoo) traditions in the name of

the Prophet (PBUH) and the companions of the Prophet (PBUH). The Muslim experts of Ahadith took great pains to identify such fake traditions but the existence of few surviving traditions in the certified (Sahih) traditions cannot be ruled out. Aside from the Prophet, the said group also narrated many traditions from Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas, and others to serve their own cause. **Such sayings, circulated by Abdullah bin Saba group, name Isaac as the son of Abraham who had been the victim of the sacrifice.** We, therefore, find certain sayings assigned to Hazrat Ali, Abdullah bin Abbas, Saeed bin Ekramah, Saeed bin Jubair, Mujahid, Shaabi, Abul Hazeel, etc. narrating that Isaac was the victim of sacrifice. On the other hand, there are more authentic resources reporting those very persons along with many others who confirm that Ishmael was the son of Abraham offered as an oblation to the Lord. It is, therefore, maintained that the reports mentioning Isaac as the victim of sacrifice were spread mostly by the Jewish converts with their own motives and the same cannot be relied upon. Most reliable sources, however, quote Abdullah bin Abbas, Hazrat Ali, Ibn Umar, Mujahid, Shaabi, Hasan Basri, Muhammad bin Kaab Qarzi, and others confirming that Ishmael was offered for sacrifice. Scholars have, therefore, opined that the Jews falsely spread the tradition about the sacrifice of Isaac whereas, in fact, Isaac was neither born till the episode of sacrifice nor did he visit Makkah, the venue of the sacrifice at the house of the Lord. We shall have further discussion on the matter in the following.

SCHOLARS SUPPORTING THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

As stated earlier, the Genesis 22:2 contains the name of Isaac as the son of Abraham offered for sacrifice while the Quran did not refute the same explicitly. This and other traditions spread by the Jewish converts have been creating certain doubts, off and on, in the minds of some scholars sporadically in the Muslims. Prominent among such Muslim scholars was a famous historian and expositor of the Quran i.e. **Ibn Jareer Tabari** (d. 310 AH i.e. about 923 AD.) who due to his studies of Israeliyat and traditions spread by Kaab Ahbaar formed the opinion that Abraham had offered Isaac for the sacrifice. Had it been some scholar other than Ibne Jareer, the successors would not have taken his opinion seriously. Since Ibne Jareer was a prominent historians and also an expositors of the Qur'an during the third and forth century after the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), therefore, his opinion could not be easily ignored. The subsequent expositors, therefore, gave serious consideration to the evidence and arguments of Ibne Jareer and finding nothing substantial in the same, maintained that the actual victim of sacrifice was Ishmael, and not Isaac because the latter had never been the only son of Abraham nor was he the first born of Abraham to qualify for the sacrifice. As against this, the Qur'an shows the good news of the birth of Isaac as a reward to Abraham for sacrifice made by him (Al-Qur'an 37:104-112). Factually, Isaac might have been born a year or so after the event of the sacrifice. It was, therefore, impossible for Isaac to be sacrificed even before his birth. **Ishmael was the true victim offered for sacrifice at Marwa near Kaaba where his descendants/followers kept the said tradition alive ever since the time of Abraham to the advent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)** who revived all the

traditions of Abraham in respect of Haj (pilgrimage), sacrifice and worship of the Lord in accordance with the pattern of Abraham.

Hafiz Abul Fida Emaduddin Ibn Kathir (d. 1373 AD), a great commentator of the Quran, evaluated all the arguments and the evidence given by Ibne Jareer, which lead him to the aforesaid judgment, and concluded that Ibne Jareer had erred in his findings. Ibn Kathir, therefore, maintained that the **actual son of Abraham offered for sacrifice was Ishmael**, and it could not be Isaac in any case. The same had been the finding of almost all other Muslim scholars up to the last quarter of the 19th century when **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of India again opined that Isaac instead of Ishmael was the victim of sacrifice**. Anyhow, almost hundred percent of the Muslims have always believed that the sacrifice was made at Makkah, and it was the tradition of Ishmael they were following since the time of Abraham. The Muslims, therefore, never had any doubt about the same. Ibne Jareer had, therefore, been the only scholar of the Old, and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (Delhi, India, 1817-1898 AD) among the later scholars who opined that it was Isaac who was offered as an oblation before the Lord. We shall, therefore, refresh ourselves with the evidence and the reasons given by Ibne Jareer and also Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in support of their contention in the following discussion.

Our study reveals that **Ibne Jareer** has been an open-minded and unbiased person. He himself has confessed that while recording anything about different nations, he relied primarily on the works of the individual writers of the nations concerned. We, therefore, observe that Ibne Jareer has reproduced large number of traditions and other information received from Kaab Al Ahbar, Wahab bin Munabbah (34 to 110 AH), Ibne Jureh, and Saddi; and also he reports from Muhammad bin Ishaq who had himself taken many such traditions from some Nasara (Christians), converted to Islam. For example, we find that Ibne Jareer numerously quoted that he heard from Ibne Humaid who heard from Salma, and Salma had heard the same from

Ibne Ishaq who received the traditions from Abu Atab. This Abu Atab belonged to Bani Tughlab and remained a Christian for about 40 years before accepting Islam. (*Tarikh-e-Tafsir wa Mufassirin*, by Ghulam Ahmad Hureri, Malik Sons Publishers, Faisalabad, Pakistan, p. 158)

All this shows that **Ibne Jareer had no hesitation to rely, to a great extent, on the traditions of the Old received from the people of the Book.** We also observe that he had neither been prejudiced against them nor did make any critical appreciation of such reports. He was primarily concerned to collect the maximum material which could be of any relevance for exposition of the Quran, and did not try to evaluate or scrutinize such reports in the way other Muslim scholars had been examining the traditions of the companions of the prophet or those ascribed to the Holy Prophet of Islam. It is also noted that **at many places, Ibne Jareer has simply put together even contradictory assertions and left the same to the readers to form their own opinion.** In many cases, we find that he did not give his clear-cut judgment or the final opinion. In the case of the sacrifice, though he has opined in favor of Isaac, yet he fails to support the same on some authentic tradition from the Holy Prophet (PBUH) or some reliable sayings of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH). He also made no reference to the fact that his opinion was somehow influenced by the Genesis 22:2 containing the name of Isaac as the son of Abraham offered for the sacrifice nor he made any distinction about the sayings of the companions of the Prophet who had relied on the teachings of Kaab Ahbar. **As regards the interpretation of the narrative of sacrifice in the Qur'an (37:99-113), we cannot believe that Ibne Jareer could have committed gross error to interpret the same** because the Qur'an clearly records that the good news about the birth of Isaac was given to Abraham after the sacrifice which manifested absolute submission of Abraham to the will of the God. As such, the possibility of a forgery in the writings of Ibn-e-Jareer by some scribe of doubtful integrity

cannot be ruled out. To elucidate the point, we shall analyze the verses referred to above to prove that Ishmael was the only son of Abraham offered as sacrifice before the Lord. The said verses distinctly exclude any possibility of Isaac being the victim of sacrifice.

As said earlier, Muslim scholars usually had reverence for the Old Testament and they hold it next to the Qur'an and the sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). It was, therefore, natural for Ibne Jareer not to doubt the integrity of Kaab Ahbar and his pupils who had learnt and passed on to others various traditions based on the Bible. Anyhow, we find no adequate reasons for Ibne Jareer collecting and recording contradictory and conflicting statements from the same persons without scrutinizing the same. Since the personalities, reporting in favor of Isaac, were also quoted opining in favor of Ishmael; therefore, Ibne Jareer finding similar evidence on both sides got confused on the ISSUE. He, therefore, might have felt inclined to rely on Gen 22:2, mentioning Isaac specifically as the victim of sacrifice. Even if there had been no forgery in the writings of Ibne Jareer, he remains the only scholar among the Muslims. No other scholar has endorsed his view. As regards Ibne Jareer's interpretation of the verses of Qur'an to support the sacrifice of Isaac, the same are not based on sound reasoning which suggest that it was some one else than Ibne Jareer who interpreted the said verses in such an erroneous manner. The arguments of Ibne Jareer in favor of Isaac are not only weak and inadequate but they also lack support from the Qur'an or the authenticated sayings of the Holy Prophet. As such, even an ordinary reader of the Qur'an cannot agree with Ibne Jareer's interpretation in favor of Isaac.

Ibne Kathir and others have, however, examined the inadequate reasoning proffered by Ibne Jareer Tabri and pointed out the error of interpretation made by him. After detailed discussion, Ibne Kathir concluded that **Ibne Jareer had no cogent reasons to prove his point, either from the Quran or some other Islamic sources.** It might be that Ibne Jareer had been misled by false

traditions spread by the Jewish converts during the early period of Islam. He failed to quote even a single certified tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) to support his contention. We, therefore, feel that **the opinion ascribed to Ibne Jareer Tabri might have been based only on the Genesis 22:2** in which we find Isaac specified for the sacrifice. The said name is a clear-cut insertion or interpolation in the text which is evident due to the fact that it conflicts with other contents of the verse as discussed by us in detail during analyzing the narrative of sacrifice in the Genesis.

So far as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) is concerned, he was a Naturalist who served the British Government in India for about 45 years i.e. from 1841-1876 A.D. He also served as a Sub-Judge in the court of justice in Delhi. In 1868, he wrote a commentary on the Bible. He went to England in 1869 and was deeply impressed by the culture, the conduct and the learning of the people in England. It is said that Syed Ahmad Khan was influenced by the ideas of certain secular writers or the so called Naturalists in the West. In about 1878, he became a member of Imperial Council in India. Syed Ahmad Khan was an educationist, a reformer, a politician and a devout Muslim at his heart, eager to promote the cause of the Muslims. He made progressive and liberal interpretation of Islam in the context of political and social atmosphere of the 19th-century Muslim India. He aimed at position of vantage for the Muslims in all spheres of life including religious, political, educational, intellectual and cultural aspects. He was, no doubt, a dynamic leader with wisdom and sagacity of a sage having humanistic liberal attitude in life.

Syed Ahmed Khan wrote on many subjects during his life which also included a commentary on the Holy Bible. Ultimately, he also attempted a commentary on the Holy Qur'an which was the last work of his life and he had covered only up to the 17th part of the Qur'an when he died in 1898. Factually, he was more of a politician and a reformer than an eminent expositor of the Qur'an.

Scholars, therefore, do not attach any importance to his work while they raise numerous objections on his peculiar manner of interpretation. Perhaps, the main reason for his favoring the sacrifice of Isaac was his study of the Bible which identified mount Moriah as the Temple Hill at Jerusalem (2Ch 3:1). Syed Ahmad Khan, perhaps, had no idea that according to the scholars chronicles was written in the post-exilic period sometime between 450-435 B.C. i.e. 1500 years after the event of the sacrifice. Prior to that, no one ever identified the Temple Hill as Mount Moriah of the sacrifice. Although Syed Ahmed Khan, too, has failed to substantiate his opinion with sound evidence and reasoning yet we are inclined to believe that the specific mention of Isaac in the Genesis 22:2 and identification of Mount Moriah with the Temple Hill as quoted above are the sole evidence with him to opine that Isaac was the victim of the sacrifice. As such, if the venue of sacrifice was Jerusalem, then it was more plausible to think Isaac as the victim of sacrifice. We, however, believe that Sir Syed Ahmed Khan took no notice of the fact that except for Gen 22:2 the Old Testament has nowhere recounted the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac nor they ever commemorated the same. This shows that the episode of the sacrifice by Abraham was not a tradition of Isaac but perhaps during the post-exilic period, the Israelites concocted the same to claim the sanctifying grace for the Israelites. The episode, therefore, did not become part of the traditions nor did it find any repetition in the literature of Israel. It was after the death/ascension of Jesus that St. Paul felt obliged to show Isaac as the prototype of the crucifixion of Jesus who, according to Paul, was predestined to be sacrificed in the pattern of Isaac. Syed Ahmad Khan also ignored higher criticism on the Bible, due to which, he did not cast any doubt against various assertions of the Bible. He did not know that except an interpolation i.e. 2Ch 3:1, the temple hill had been referred to as mount Moriah in the Bible or the literature of the Israelites. Even upto the advent of Jesus, there had been no other reference denoting the temple hill as Mount Moriah. This shows that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan formed the said opinion attaching assumption

of truth to the contents of the Bible without critical review of the same.

We shall, therefore, examine the background of the sacrifice of Ishmael, and also the narrative of the Quran in the following pages to elucidate that both Ibne Jareer and Syed Ahmad Khan erred in their opinion. Factually, even an ordinary person going through the narrative of sacrifice in the Qur'an cannot agree with them. The Qur'an clearly indicates the sacrifice of the first born of Abraham while the good news about the birth of Isaac was given as a reward to the outright submission of Abraham to the will of God (Al-Qur'an 37:100-113). Hence, no other scholar in the Muslim world had ever endorsed the sacrifice of Isaac. Keeping in view the vast knowledge of Ibne Jareer, however, it seems impossible that he could have erred in interpreting the Qur'an in a grossly mistaken way. We, therefore, are of the opinion that some mischief has been done with the work of Ibne Jareer. As such, the opinion favoring Isaac instead of Ishmael can be considered as a spurious insertion by some scribe of doubtful integrity to assert priority to the contents of the Genesis.

CHARACTERS INVOLVED IN THE SACRIFICE

Before analyzing the narrative of sacrifice in the Qur'an, it will be appropriate to have a glimpse of the characters involved in the episode. According to the Qur'an, Abraham was the main figure chosen for the test and trial. As such, the Qur'an does not even name the victim of sacrifice. The name of Isaac, however, has been mentioned as one of the rewards announced by the Lord in response to absolute submission of Abraham before the Lord which culminated in the sacrifice of his only son (Ishmael). Anyhow, from the study of the Islamic traditions as well as the Bible, we learn that aside for Abraham, there were four other persons involved, directly or indirectly, in the sacrifice. They were Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac. It will, therefore, be useful to trace the background and characteristics, the attitudes and the priorities of those persons to find out their disposition and suitability to submit to the will of God.

1) Ibrahim Khalilullah

The narratives of the sacrifice in the Bible and the Qur'an confirm that Ibrahim was the primary person who was tried and tested with the commandment of sacrifice, and main credit for the same, must go to him. God, therefore, reveals that:-

"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." (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Baqara] 2:124)

The above verse shows that Ibrahim remained under tests and trials throughout his life and he fulfilled all the tests appreciably. Following three tests, crown all other trials of Abraham.

(a) Confrontation with his Father, the People and the King

To start with, Abraham had to face strong opposition right at home, from his father and family and also from the people of Ur. In spite of his continued and vigorous efforts to stop the people from worshiping the idols, people's response was in the negative. Subsequently, when Abraham smashed the idols, he was brought to task, and according to certain traditions, he remained imprisoned for about 7 years. Ultimately, when the king faced a defeat in arguments pertaining to the Lord God of the universe, he had no alternate except to throw him into a huge furnace of fire prepared especially for an exemplary punishment to Abraham. Although God saved Abraham miraculously, yet his father, the people, and the king increased the persecution against him. In spite of all the hardships, he did not lose heart, left Ur in search of some place more suitable for preaching the worship of the Almighty. He, therefore, left behind all the riches and glory of his father and the comforts of home, only for the sake of the Lord. While leaving his home, he said:

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي سَهِيْلِيْنِ

He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! (Al-Qur'an: 37: 99)

The main reason for Abraham's leaving Ur was, therefore, to try some other land more suitable for preaching the worship of the Lord exclusively. He, therefore, left Ur with the hope that the Lord God would guide him towards some land with better prospects for preaching the faith in the one Lord God of the Universe. As such, Abraham did not leave his father's home with any anticipation of getting numerous descendants to possess the entire land of Canaan forever, as the Bible makes us believe. (Gen 12:2, 7)

(b) Deserion of wife and the Loving son in the Wilderness

The second most important trial of Abraham's life was that he was childless at the age of 75 years and his wife Sarah was barren. In spite of all this he had neither any impatience nor any complaints against the Lord. Anyhow, he humbly prayed to the Lord with the words:

37:100 "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!" (Al-Qur'an: 37:100)

In response to the aforesaid prayer, God gave him the glad tidings as under:

So We gave him the good news of **a boy ready to suffer and forbear.** (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:101)

According to the Genesis, Abraham left his home twice. Firstly, he left Ur and secondly left Haran for Canaan. He faced all the hardships of the desert life, and also had to face the famine. He went as far as Egypt to deliver the message of the Lord to the king and the people there. Unlike the king of Ur, the king of Egypt did not treat him harshly, gave him due regards besides giving his own daughter in the service of the great prophet along with gifts including cattle, sheep, goats, camels, servants/slaves, and gold etc. The old Shaykh married Hagar who gave birth to Abraham's son whom he named Ishmael which means 'God has heard' or 'God has responded to his prayer'. This was, perhaps, the first ray of hope in the barren life of Abraham who had already reached 86th year of his life. Ishmael was just in his suckling period when the Lord commanded Abraham to take him along with his mother to Makkah to stand before the house of the Lord there. This again was a great trial for Abraham who was well-stricken in age. He had to separate his 'only son' and his young wife from home and to leave them in the wilderness of Paran (Makkah) about 1400 km away from Canaan. The child and the wife of Abraham had no provisions for their lives except some bread and a bottle of water with them. Look what a great trust Abraham had in the Lord and how he submitted to the will of God unconditionally! By the grace of the

Almighty, Abraham turned out successfully in the aforesaid trial.

(c) The Commandment for the Sacrifice Of Ishmael

The third and perhaps the greatest trial pertained to the time when the aforesaid 'only son' of Abraham reached the age where he could assist his old father. According to the Qur'an, Abraham had the vision as quoted hereunder:-

"Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "**O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice:** Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! **Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!**" (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:102)

By this time, Abraham had reached 99 years of his age. Sarah was barren and worn out at the age of about 89 years. There was absolutely no hope of getting any child from her. Even Hagar did not have another child during 13 years after the birth of Ishmael. **Ishmael was, therefore, the only child and the only hope of the entire family i.e. Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, when the aforesaid commandment being the greatest trial of Abraham's life was received in a dream.** This happened even before the glad tidings of Isaac when Abraham had no other child nor any hope or promise for the same. This was the real trial of Abraham's life but by the grace of God, he turned out successful in the same by offering his first born and the only son as a sacrifice to the Lord. Abraham, thus, proved that his love and obedience to the Lord far exceeded the love and liking of anything else in the world. He, therefore, did not hesitate to offer even his only son to the Lord and proceeded to comply the commandment as soon as he had the vision for the same.

From detailed study of Abraham's life, one finds that he always served the cause of the Lord, and did not care for any personal comforts or material benefits. He was devoted to the Lord to such an extent that he left his father, family,

the property, and his homeland only for the sake of the Lord. After leaving Ur, he went from place to place to preach the worship of one and the only Lord God of the universe. He went to foreign lands with different languages all around the Arabian Peninsula solely to guide all the people of the world towards the Lord. Abraham was, therefore, accepted by the Lord as a most righteous, steadfast, and forbearing servant, and **He made him Imam un Naas and blessings for all the nations of the world.** As a reward, God exalted him to a high position with Him, and gave glad tidings of 12 sons from Ishmael and also Isaac, Jacob, and their progeny. All this was a bounty from the Lord in response to complete submission to the will of the Lord by Abraham and his son Ishmael.

2) Sarah: the Faithful Wife of Abraham

According to Islamic traditions, only Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Lot believed in Abraham, and both left Ur along with him on his journey towards the Lord. Sarah always had been a very pious lady who served her husband faithfully through thick and thin whether in a city or in the desert. She graciously allowed Abraham to marry Hagar who gave birth to Ishmael. He was, therefore, the only son and the darling of Sara, Hagar and Abraham for 13 years. The commandment of sacrifice was, perhaps, received during that period of time. Hence, sacrifice of Ishmael must have been a matter of great concern and shock for all of them. According to the custom prevailing in the society, Sara had better claim as a loving mother to Ishmael as compared with Hagar. As such, the sacrifice of the only son was a matter of severe test and trial for the entire family especially when there was no hope of another child to them. Needless to mention that Sara had grown extremely old and even Hagar did not bear another child up to the time the commandment was received to sacrifice the only son of Abraham. Since it was the most crucial test for the family, therefore, Abraham's submission to the will of the Lord earned extreme appreciation of the Lord who, as a reward to Abraham, blessed him and gave him the good news about the birth of Isaac, Jacob and even the 12

princes as the sons of Ishmael. We, therefore, hold that it was due to the piety and devotion of Sara to the Lord that she was rewarded with Isaac who was destined to be the ancestor of thousands of prophets in Israel.

As discussed earlier, the Lord God had been trying his prophets and the people during various times in the history of man. Devotees to the Lord love him more than anything else in the world. Eventually, when the Lord put the people under a trial, the true devotees sacrifice all their interests and material gains to fulfill the commandment of the Lord. Such people are considered righteous before the Lord whom he rewards appropriately in the world and also in the life to come. The sacrifice of the only son of Abraham, too, was a test of devotion and submission to the will of the Lord. Usually, the will of the Lord finds its expression in His law. In case of Sarah, we observe that the Genesis has depicted her as an extremely jealous, cruel, and selfish woman desiring all the material inheritance of Abraham solely for her son Isaac. Her intense desire to deprive Ishmael from his lawful share was a clear cut violation of the law of the Lord besides her unwillingness to accept the work of God who made Ishmael the first born of Abraham. To fulfill her earnest desire to make Isaac the sole inheritor of Abraham against the Law of the Lord, she exhorted Abraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael to sure death in the desert. As such, if Sarah actually had the temperament of enforcing her own will against the will of the Lord as depicted in the Genesis, then there could be hardly any possibility to assume that she could have agreed to sacrifice her only son in any case. The afore-stated qualities of Sarah, therefore, disqualify her for allowing the sacrifice of her only son Isaac to make Ishmael inherit everything from Abraham.

Muslims, however, hold that Sarah was extremely pious lady devoted to the Lord. They do not believe in any blemish against her as we find in the Genesis. All such allegations against Sarah reflect only the narrow-mindedness and materialistic approach of the Israelites.

The said description does not match with the righteous and self-less characters of both Abraham and Sarah. Hence, the story of expulsion of Ishmael and Hagar seems to be a concoction of the Israelites to assert superiority of the Israelites over the Ishmaelites. It cannot, therefore, be considered as a faithfully related story of the facts but a product of the prejudice of the Israelites against their rivals as we find in the Genesis.

As regards Sarah, there is no reference to show that she was either consulted or she agreed to offer her only son Isaac.

Keeping in view the background of expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, there could be no possibility of Sarah's agreeing to sacrifice Isaac to spare Ishmael, the only son fulfilling the requirements of sacrifice in accordance with the law. According to the Genesis, Sarah had been so eager to make Isaac the sole inheritor of the entire wealth of Abraham that she demanded expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael in a cruel manner to deprive them from the inheritance in clear-cut violation of the law of the Lord. We, therefore, find no plausibility in the suggestion that Sarah could have remained a silent spectator of the sacrifice which eliminated Isaac to spare Ishmael to make him inherit everything belonging to the family.

3) Isaac, the Great Prophet and Ancestor of Israel

We discussed earlier that the Genesis has painted almost a dark picture of Isaac. As compared to the same, the Qur'an has upheld him as a prophet possessing power and vision, revelation and righteousness. The same we find in the following:-

The glad tidings given by God to Abraham about Isaac in the Quran are as under:

وَهَبَنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ رَأْفَلَةً وَكُلَّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ

And We bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional gift, (a

grandson), Jacob, and We made **righteous men** of every one (of them). (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Anbiya] 21:72)

And

وَوَمِنَ الَّذِينَ إِنَّمَا أَعْجَبَهُنَّ حُكْمُ رَبِّهِنَّ وَالْكِتَابُ
وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ أَجْرًا فِي
الْدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny **Prophethood** and **Revelation**, and We granted him his reward in this life; and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the **Righteous**. (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Ankaboot] 29:27)

And

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

And We gave him the good news of Isaac - **a prophet**,- **one of the Righteous**. (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:112)

And

وَادْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَئِكُمْ أَلْيَدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ

And commemorate Our Servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **possessors of Power and Vision**. (Al-Qur'an: [Sad] 38:45)

The Qur'an, therefore, refutes the charges of timidity, passivity, impotence, oblivion or inaction on the part of the patriarchs as alleged by the Genesis. It exalts Isaac in a superb manner. Referring to the visit of the angels to Abraham in the apparel of human beings, the Qur'an tells us that Abraham served them with meal which they refused to eat. Since they were strangers for Abraham, therefore, he feared that their refusal to eat meant some aversion on their part denoting danger for Abraham. Perceiving his fear, the angels said to him:-

قَالُوا لَا تَوْجُلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلامٍ عَلَيْهِ

They said: "Fear not! We give thee glad tidings of a son **endowed with wisdom**." (Al-Qur'an: 15:53)

All this shows that the Qur'an has ascribed various appellations to uphold the righteous conduct of Isaac. In

spite of all this, there has been no reference to Isaac's forbearance, devotion or dedication to the Lord. Even according to the Genesis, he remained domesticated throughout his life and did not stand before the house of the Lord because as per law (Torah) only the eldest son belonged to the Lord. Isaac was, therefore, neither eligible nor was he required for the sacrifice because Abraham had already dedicated his first born and separated him from the family to stand before the house of the Lord at Makkah. As such, only the first born and the dedicated one could be the lawful victim for the sacrifice.

4) Hagar, the Selfless Devotee to the Lord

As discussed earlier, Hagar was the daughter of the king of Egypt who was impressed by the personality, piety and the preaching of Prophet Abraham. After Lot and Sara, she might have been the first person who accepted the faith of Abraham and left all charms of life only to serve the great prophet of the Lord. Hagar, therefore, opted to relinquish all the comforts, wealth, and grandeur of life in the palace of the king only for the sake of the Almighty. This shows an extreme selflessness and devotion to the cause of the Lord on her part. Hagar was a lady in her prime youth when along with her suckling child she was taken about 1400 km away from Canaan, and was deserted by her husband there in the parched wilderness near the present site of Kaaba, to endure loneliness, the sufferings and other hazards there. The exceedingly devout wife of the great prophet had accompanied her husband without any question about the destination or about her faith. The prophet himself did not disclose anything to her. Ultimately Abraham, Hagar and the infant Ishmael reached the place of Kaaba. When Abraham was departing from them to go back to Canaan, Hagar, perhaps, moved by the pathetic sight of Ishmael, the infant, inquired from Abraham as to why he was leaving them there? When Abraham gave no reply, she repeated her question, but of no avail. Soon Hagar realized that all the acts of the prophet were subservient to the will of the Lord. She, therefore, asked him for the last time, as if he had received any commandment from the Lord to do so.

The reply was in the affirmative to which she responded that "Then He (Allah) will not neglect us". The *Sahih Bukhari* narrates the episode in the following words:-

Narrated Ibn Abbas:

"Abraham brought her and her son Ishmael while she was suckling him, to a place near the Ka'ba under a tree on the spot of Zam-zam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water So he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her **Then she asked him, "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us,"** and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards, and on reaching the Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'ba, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayers:

'O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House (Kaba at Mecca) in order, O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks.' (14.37)
Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). (*SAHIH BUKHARI*: Volume 4, Book 55, Number 583)

The tradition of the prophet shows utmost devotion and godliness of Hagar who surrendered her will before the will of God without any objection whatsoever. She knew that Abraham was a very rich man and the king of Egypt had given a large number of sheep, goats, camels, servants, and gold etc. to him, which might have been a dowry of Hagar. In spite of this, Hagar did not demand even a penny from the wealth of Abraham. It was in the cause of God that she had relinquished the nobility, the dignities and the luxuries of the royal palace only to be in the service of the great prophet. After giving birth to Ishmael, it was a great shock for her to live a secluded life far away from Abraham in the wilderness. It was only due to Hagar's utmost

devotion to the Lord that she could sacrifice her dignity, luxuries and future in the royal palace. It was for the same cause that she had sacrificed her home, her husband and all inheritance from Abraham to please the Lord. She willingly put her only son to imminent danger of starvation and death in the wilderness to please the Lord. As such, only Hagar could be the selfless lady who had no hesitation to sacrifice her only son Ishmael to fulfil the commandment of the Lord.

Hagar had the unique distinction of leaving the Pharaoh's palace and her parents in Egypt to live in a tent in the desert with the prophet. She was perhaps the first lady in the entire history of mankind who was later on sent at a distance of 1400 km away from her husband to live all alone in the wilderness without any company or provisions whatsoever. **No other woman had ever served the house of the Lord in the wilderness before her nor we find any other after her living with a suckling child in the desert.** She had departed from her parents and the royal palace for the sake of Abraham, the prophet. She again departed from Abraham, for the sake of the Lord. **She was accustomed to sacrifice everything for the Lord. The sacrifice of her only son before the Lord, therefore, depicted only the culmination of her love, faith, and devotion to the Lord.**

5) Ishmael, the Forbearing

The very name 'Ishmael' shows that God had heard the prayer of Abraham, and Ishmael was born in response to his prayer. We observe that episode of Abraham's leaving Ur has been described by the Quran in the following words:

وَقَالَ إِلٰيْهِبْ إِلَى رَبِّي سَيِّدِنَاينَ - رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ -

فَبَشَّرَ تَاهُ بِغُلامٍ حَلِيمٍ

He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!" So We gave him the good news of **a boy ready to suffer and forbear.** (Al-Qur'an: [As-

Saaffat] 37:99-101)

This shows that the first child that Abraham got after his departure from Ur and Haran was the one whose glad tiding has been described in the words 'Ghulam un Haleem' i.e. forbearing child. The very next verses tell us that:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السُّنْنُ قَالَ يَا بْنِي إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْفَرُ مَاذَا تَرَى
قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعُلْ مَا تُؤْمِنُ مَرْسَتَجْدِنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one **practising Patience and Constancy!**" (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:102)

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَاهُ وَتَلَهُ لِلْجَبَّينِ - وَكَادَ يَنْهَاهُ أَنْ يَأْتِي إِلَيْهِمْ - قَدْ صَدَقْتَ

الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَنَّا لَكَ بَنِي رَجُلَيْنِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

So when they had both **submitted their wills (to Allah)**, and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him "O Abraham! "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:103-105)

The foregoing verses of the Quran depict Ishmael as **the boy ready to suffer and forbear**, practicing Patience and Constancy, and submitting his will to the will of Allah. These qualities are the necessary prerequisite for a son to be sacrificed. In contrast to the same, the Genesis shows Sarah as selfish and greedy woman unwilling to accept the work of God in making Ishmael the first born of Abraham. Her desire to make Isaac inherit the entire wealth of Abraham was a violation against the Law of the Lord. As such, Sarah the tigress woman as alleged by the Genesis could in no case agree to sacrifice her son whom she desired to make the only inheritor of Abraham against the law of the Lord.

Although the Bible has a different narration, yet it transpires that Ishmael and his mother were sent away to the wilderness when Ishmael was yet a suckling child. His mother submitted before the will of the Lord and stayed in the wilderness with the child without raising any objection. She did not demand anything from the riches of Abraham. His son Ishmael, too, did not claim anything from the inheritance of his father, even after his death when Ishmael was a strong man, an archer, having 12 grown up sons as compared with Isaac, and his two sons hardly of fifteen years each. This shows that Ishmael was devoted to the Lord wholeheartedly, belonged to the God and God was everything for him. He attached supreme importance to the submission before the will of the Lord, more than his own self and any material benefits in this world. **In view of this, there could be no one else more suitable for the sacrifice than Ishmael, the forbearing.** The unique trio of the virtuous devotees i.e. Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael had the same qualities of the head and heart conforming completely to the requirements of the oblation, and were, therefore, the genuine participants in the great event.

From the background of the characters, described above, we conclude that Sarah and Isaac, though very righteous and pious personalities, yet they did not compete in devotion, forbearance, and submission to the will of God in the manner of Hagar, Ishmael, and Abraham. This, therefore, leaves **no doubt that the only son sacrificed was Ishmael, and no one else.**

ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES OF SACRIFICE IN THE QURAN

In verses 75 to 82 of Sura 37 (Saaffat), we find that the Almighty Allah reveals about the trial faced by Noah due to the transgressions of his people. God delivered Noah and his followers, blessed them and made the progeny of Noah endure on earth while the evil-doers were destroyed in the

deluge. Blessings on Noah were also left for his progeny. In continuation with the foregoing, Almighty Allah has narrated Abraham's struggle with the idolatrous people and the king of his native city in the verses 83 to 98. The meanings of those verses are given below:

"Verily among those **who followed his (Noah's) Way was Abraham**. Behold! he approached his Lord with **a sound heart**. Behold! he said to his father and to his people, "What is that which ye worship? "Is it a falsehood- gods other than Allah- that ye desire? "Then what is your idea about the **Lord of the worlds?**" Then did he cast a glance at the Stars? And he said, "I am indeed sick (at heart)!" So they turned away from him, and departed. Then did he turn to their gods and said, "will ye not eat (of the offerings before you)?..." "What is the matter with you that ye speak not (intelligently)?" Then did he turn upon them, striking (them) with the right hand. Then came (the worshippers) with hurried steps, and faced (him). He said: "Worship ye that which ye have (yourselves) carved? "But Allah has created you and your handiwork!" 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! (Al-Qur'an 37:83-98)

Let's not forget the fact that the Lord God has created everything in the universe only to worship him. God's relation with man is, therefore, the relation of the creator with his creation or the ultimate master with his slaves. All other creatures being under compulsion to worship the Lord were programmed in such a manner that they had neither a choice nor enjoyed any liberty to do anything against the programming by the Lord. Although the major aspects of the life, the nature, the physique and the environments of man and Jinn were programmed accordingly yet the Lord provided guidance to them to choose between the good and bad with liberty to act in accordance with their own choice. After granting liberty to man and jinn to think and to act, the Lord God required of them to worship no one except their creator and to surrender themselves to the will of God. Hence, out of all his creatures, Adam and his progeny volunteered themselves to take up the responsibility due to

which they were chosen for the trust of receiving guidance from the Lord (Al-Qur'an 33:72). Man, as such, was duty bound to fulfill the commandments of the Lord with freedom to choose between the good and bad. God, therefore, chose Adam as the first trustee of the covenant and numerous other persons from his progeny were exalted to the high ranks to lead the people to worship their creator following in the steps of the said messengers/prophets (Al-Qur'an 3:33). Hence, Adam was given a probation period in the paradise where he committed the mistake of forgetfulness about the commandment of Lord and committed the sin. On realizing his mistake, he immediately confessed his fault and sought mercy and forgiveness from the Lord which was granted to him by the Lord graciously. As such, after receiving the initial lesson not to believe in the vicissitudes of Satan Adam was exalted to the rank of the first messenger of the Lord who designated him as His vice regent on earth. Among his progeny, Seth, Enoch, and Noah followed the path of Adam.

We learn from the Qur'an (71:23) that people of Noah were worshiping various Gods. Even the verses (Al-Qur'an 37:83-98) quoted above refer to the same background where Noah had been preaching to the people not to worship any one except the Lord God but they did not abstain from their evil ways in spite earnest efforts of Noah for very long time. Subsequently, aside from other great prophets like Hud and Saleh, Abraham was the follower of the way of Noah. He started his preachings firstly at his home and did his best to guide the people to worship one and the only Lord God of the universe. Secondly, he preached the same message even to the king but the people as well as the King refused to desist from idolatry. They even tried to eliminate Abraham from amongst them. When the Lord subjected the enemies of Abraham to humiliation, the people and the King started to devise other strategies to tease, persecute and punish Abraham. Eventually, even his father abused him and threatened to stone him to death unless he stopped condemning the idols and the false gods worshiped by the

people at Ur. The father of Abraham reviled him and told Abraham to get away far from him to save his life. Abraham, therefore, decided to leave his hometown for any other place to which the Lord might guide him. While leaving Ur, he also prayed to the Lord for granting him a righteous son. In response to his prayer, the Lord gave him the good news of a forbearing son. The same first born of Abraham has been specified as the victim of sacrifice. The Qur'an narrates the episode from the time Abraham decided to leave Ur for some other place:

وَقَالَ إِلَيْهِ إِلَى رَبِّي سَهِّدِين

[99] He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

[100] "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!"

فَبَشَّرَ رَبُّهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ

[101] So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear.

**فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ الْسَّمْعَ قَالَ يَا بُنْيَ إِلَيْ أَرْأَيْ فِي الْمَتَامِرِ أَلَيْ أَذْكُوكَ فَانْفَذْ مَاذَا تَرَى
قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعُلْ مَا تُؤْمِرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ**

[102] Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! **Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!**"

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَهَا وَتَلَهُ لِلْجَبِينَ

[103] So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice),

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ

[104] We called out to him "O Abraham!

قُدْصَدْقَتِ الرُّؤْبَنِ إِلَّا كَذَلِكَ تَجْزِي الْمُخْسِنِينَ

[105] "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ

[106] For this was obviously a trial-

وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِنِعْجَ عَظِيمٍ

[107] And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice:

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرَةِ

[108] And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times:

سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ

[109] "Peace and salutation to Abraham!"

كَذَلِكَ نَجِزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

[110] Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

[111] For he was one of our believing Servants.

(Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:99-111)

The Muslims believe that the Quran is the greatest ever living miracle in the universe. Each and every word of the Quran is extremely important, and has to be pondered upon thoroughly. As such, we need to examine each word of the verses given above intensively to grasp the exact contents of the same. The first verse in the above narrative i.e. 99 tells us that Abraham, while leaving his home town Ur, said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!" This shows that **Abraham had no definite destination in mind before leaving his home-town nor was he going somewhere in the quest of innumerable descendants who would own the entire land of Canaan forever**. Abraham, therefore, had no allurement of innumerable descendants or the possession of the land of Canaan to prompt him to go there as suggested by the Genesis.

We also observe that the Bible has nothing to narrate about the childhood, the youth and the endeavors of Abraham to preach and promote the worship of one and the only Lord God of all the worlds. The Quran, on the other hand, reveals that God had guided Abraham to right conduct in his early childhood (21:51), and he was among those **who followed the way of Noah** (37:83). Like Noah and other prophets before him, Abraham strived hard to preach the way of the Lord. At the very outset, he had to confront with his father, his family, and the people to guide them to the worship of the God of the universe. His family and the people were, however, so adamant to follow their own traditions that they refused to stop worshipping the idols than worshiping the God of all the worlds. As stated earlier, Abraham was not imprisoned and also thrown into the fire but even after witnessing the clear signs from the Lord (the miracles), did not show any laxity towards Abraham. In their hysterical fits of anger, the people started planning new devices to get rid of him. This bitter and ever-increasing animosity of the people left no way for Abraham except to move to some other place in the hope of finding more congenial atmosphere for preaching the word of God there. His move from his home was, therefore, only for the promotion of his mission as a prophet, **and he did not leave his place of birth, his father, and his family merely to go to Canaan in pursuit of land or descendants there.** Here we find a world of difference between the narrative in the Qur'an and the one we find in Gen 12:1, 2 and 7 which shows that God allured Abraham to go there with the promise of innumerable descendants to own the land of Canaan forever. **The Qur'an does not testify that God had given any attraction of descendants or material benefits to Abraham for going to Canaan** nor we find any destination specified fixed for Abraham at the time of leaving Ur. This is evident from verse 99 of Sura 37 quoted above. It is, however, learnt that before leaving his home-town, Abraham prayed for the guidance of the Almighty for some suitable place, and also he beseeched the Lord for a righteous son. He

said: "*O my Lord! Grant me a righteous son*" (Al-Qur'an 37:100) God, therefore, guided His prophet to different places in Mesopotamia and Syria. Subsequently, the Lord led him to Canaan from where he went to Egypt and to certain places in southern Arabia upto Yemen for preaching the word of God. We, therefore, observe that besides his personal efforts, Abraham deputed Lot to preach in the region of Sodom. In Arabia, he deputed Ishmael. **Both Lot and Ishmael were, however, supervised by Abraham throughout his life** while he himself sojourned at Canaan with Sarah and Isaac till his death. It is, therefore, conceivable that Abraham had made extensive efforts to call the people towards the Lord. He groomed Lot, Ishmael, Isaac and also Jacob for sometime. As a result of his efforts, many people might have converted themselves to the faith of Abraham and he must have left certain follower of his faith. His efforts at Makkah had definitely brought good results where maximum number of his descendants and others continued to follow his faith and traditions for very long times after him.

Reverting to the time when Abraham was leaving Ur, we observe that he was childless at the age of 75 years and Sarah was barren at the age of 65 years. It was, therefore, the natural urge of Abraham to aspire for a helping hand to promote his mission in the unknown foreign lands after him. He, therefore, prayed for a righteous son and the Lord God responded to his prayer with the promise of granting him غلام حلیم (a forbearing son) as is evident from verse 101 meaning: "*So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear.*"

The words غلام حلیم (Ghulamun Haleem: a boy ready to suffer and forbear) are of utmost importance in the aforesaid verse. Abraham was leaving behind all the wealth and comforts at home, and moving to strange lands to come across unfamiliar people there. Only a gentle son 'ready to suffer and forebear' could be the suitable one to endure the odds and hardships of the journey in the foreign lands. Only such a son could assist Abraham in his mission

adequately. It was about the same son that the Lord revealed as under:-

"Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!" (Al-Qur'an 37:102)

To analyze the verse, we divide it into four parts:

When (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work

I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice

What is thy view?

Thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy.

We shall evaluate each of the above points separately herein below:

A. *The son reached the age of serious work*

The term 'son' in the verse quoted above refers to the Son born in response to the prayer of Abraham (37:100) and the Almighty foretold that the said son will be *Haleem* i.e. gentle and forbearing. The said son was Ishmael without any doubt. **Even the Bible tells us that the first born of Abraham was Ishmael who was born when Abraham was 86 years old** (Gen 16:16). Isaac, being the younger son, was born 14 years after Ishmael when Abraham was of 100 years (Gen 17:17). This certifies that up to the birth of Isaac, Ishmael was the only son of Abraham. The very name Ishmael ('God hears' or 'God has heard') is the ineradicable certificate that he was the son of Promise and also a son having patience and constancy in him. It was about the same son that Abraham saw in a dream that he was sacrificing him before the Lord. The age of the child at the time of the dream has been described as the age of serious work in the translation given above which is normally 12 to 15 years. The actual words of the Quran i.e. فَلَمَّا تَبَلَّغَ مَعْهُ السُّنْنَىٰ may also mean that when the said child grew

up to assist in the efforts of his father. The word سعی also means walking, running, endeavour, exertion, attempt, striving, purposing, diligence, care, labor, and 'the age at which men begin to work' (*John Richardson Dictionary Persian, Arabic, and English*, London 1829). All this suggests that the boy was about 13 years when Abraham saw the dream as if he were sacrificing him before the Lord. Since the dreams of the prophet are just like revelations from the Lord, therefore, Abraham did not wait even for the formal commandment and without any hesitation, he proceeded immediately to fulfill the dream. The good news about the birth of Isaac was, therefore, the reward to Abraham for his absolute submission to the will of God. As such, there could be no possibility of any commandment to sacrifice Isaac before his birth. According to the unchanging law of the Lord only the first born belonged to the Lord. Isaac being the younger son of Abraham was not, therefore, eligible for the sacrifice in accordance with the Law.

B. I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice

It is the common faith of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims that the word of God is everlasting and God does not change. The law of the Lord also remains constant, and the said law never allowed the sacrifice of human beings. The human sacrifice has always remained as an abominable act in the eyes of the Lord, and He never issued a commandment to sacrifice human beings. We also note that the Lord advised the Israelites to buy back their first-born males and offer lambs to ransom them. It cannot, therefore, be conceived that God would command Abraham explicitly to offer his son for the sacrifice even in order to test him. The correct version is the same as we find in the Quran i.e. "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (37:102).

Factually, Abraham received no commandment from the Lord to sacrifice his only son. Abraham saw only a vision that he was sacrificing his son. Being extremely devoted to the Lord, he immediately proceeded to fulfill his dream.

Hence, the narration in the Qur'an clearly differs from the one in 22:2 which states that the Lord gave specific commandment to Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, in the land of Moriah. Since the said commandment would contravene God's law, therefore, we cannot assume that the Lord God would ever create any incompatibility in his commandments. Such incompatibility cannot be attributed to the Lord. The correct position, therefore, must be the same as revealed by the Qur'an that Abraham, in fact, saw in the vision that he was sacrificing his only son to the Lord. Abraham, a unique devotee and having a sound heart قلب سليم (37:84), took the dream as an implied commandment from the Lord, and he proceeded to carry out the same without any hesitation or loss of time. We also know that in response to the commandment of the Lord, Abraham had already vowed in the following words:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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.**" (Al-Qur'an: 2:131)

God's commandment to bow or to submit to the will of the Lord is the universal commandment to all his creatures including the human beings. Everything in the nature, therefore, worships the Lord. Even the man, in spite of certain liberties granted to him, is destined to the servitude of the Lord. God, therefore, has always been putting his subjects under trial to test their faith to differentiate the pretenders from the devotees who make their first priority to fulfill the commandments of the lord at any cost. God, therefore, tested Abraham and he turned out to be true to his undertaking meritoriously. He proceeded to fulfill the dream even without waiting for a formal or specific direction for the same.

C. What is thy view?

The verse 102 in the narrative tells us that before proceeding to the sacrifice, Abraham consulted his only son to know his response to the commandment. He said:

قَالَ يَا بْنِي إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أُنِي أَذْهَبُكَ فَأَنْظُرْ مَاذَا أَتَرَىٰ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعُلْ مَا تُؤْمِنُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!" (Al-Qur'an 37:102)

It is worth noting here that Abraham did not keep the victim ignorant about the ordeal, as Gen.22:7 makes us believe. There is no doubt that Abraham would have carried out the command in any case, and even without consent and cooperation of the son but the same would have been a compulsion, depriving the victim of any credit for willing obedience to the commandment of the Lord. One can hardly find any words explaining the point in a better manner than those of Allama Iqbal as quoted below:

"Now goodness is not a matter of compulsion; it is the self's free surrender to the moral ideal and arises out of a willing cooperation of free egos."

(*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, by Sir Muhammad Iqbal, published by Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf Books Sellers and Publishers, Lahore 1960, p. 85).

It was, therefore, in the fitness of the things to know before hand as to how the son of the great prophet was likely to turn out in the trial. The inspiring reply of the son confirmed his readiness and participation in the self sacrifice, proving him truly as غلام حلیم, i.e. 'the son ready to suffer and forbear'. The willing self sacrifice of Ishmael adds to the righteousness and merit of both the father and the son subjected to the test and trial by the Lord.

Since the son was the one 'ready to suffer and forbear', therefore, he willingly acceded to the implication reassuring his father with the firm promise of patience and constancy, as we find in the words of the Qur'an: يَا أَبَتِ افْعُلْ مَا تُؤْمِنُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ

(O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy! (37:102). The verse 102 ends in the words الصابرين which is plural of صابر (i.e. ready to suffer and forbear), which must be an essential prerequisite of the son offered for sacrifice. To pin point the 'Sabir' between the two sons of Abraham, we again seek help from the Quran, which confirms that:-

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذُلْكَفَلَ كُلُّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"And (remember) Isma'il, Idris, and Zul-kifl, all (men) of constancy and patience;" (Al-Qur'an 21:85)

The afore-mentioned verse of the Quran confirms Ishmael as one of the 'صابرين' i.e. 'men of constancy and patience'. This leaves no chance of any speculation in favor of Isaac who has never been mentioned among the '*Sabireen*' in the Bible or in the Qur'an. As regards Isaac, the Qur'an has no bias against him. It has exalted him much beyond his narrative in the Genesis. The Qur'an has described Isaac among the 'prophets' (19:49), 'having the tongue of truth' (19:50), 'righteous' (21:72) (29:27) (37:112), 'possessor of power and vision' (38:45), 'the elect and the good' (38:47), and 'man of wisdom or knowledge' (15:53) but nowhere has he been mentioned among those who were 'ready to suffer or to forbear'. The Qur'an has identified Ishmael with the said quality because he not only promised to endure the sacrifice willingly but also because he willingly lay prostrate to be sacrificed. The Lord, therefore, certified him as strictly true to his promise.

It is also worth-noting that the Quran has given primacy to Ishmael (verse 21:85) as compared with other prophets in respect of their quality of readiness to suffer and to forbear. Although Idris (Enoch) was a great prophet of the Old and Zul-kifl, another prophet after him, yet Ishmael has been mentioned number one in order of preference over Idris and Zul-kifl due to the fact that he did not hesitate even to

lay his life before the Lord, and surrendered himself absolutely before the will of the Lord. No one except Abraham could surpass Ishmael in his qualities of suffering and obeying the commandment of the Lord. Hence, there could be no one else to exceed Ishmael in his eligibility as well as suitability as the victim of the sacrifice.

D. Thou will find me one practising Patience and Constancy

The verse under discussion had also described the wholehearted willingness as well as the firm promise of the son who was being sacrificed. The Quran has again singled out Ishmael regarding the quality of his **truthfulness to fulfill his promise** besides exalting him as *Rasul* and *Nabi*.:

وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِنَّمَا عِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا

"Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: **He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a messenger** (and) a prophet". (Al-Qur'an 19:54)

We also note that neither the Bible nor the Quran referred to any other promise made by Ishmael except his words بِإِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ (O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills, one practising Patience and Constancy! (37:102). From this verse, it transpires that the son who promised in the aforesaid words and fulfilled the same, was no one else than Ishmael; as Isaac has never been referred to as صادق الوعد i.e. 'strictly true to his promise', nor the person accomplishing the promise. Under the circumstances, those who think that the name of Ishmael has not been mentioned specifically in the Quran as a son offered for sacrifice, must read the foregoing verses which pin-point him by name bearing the qualities befitting the sacrifice and the fulfillment of the promise made by the son offered for the sacrifice.

BOTH SURRENDERED TO THE WILL OF GOD

As stated earlier, God had commanded Abraham to submit to Him, and he instantly undertook to submit to Him with the words اسلمت لرب العالمين as we find in the verse hereunder:

إذ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"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." (Al-Qur'an: 2:131)

The fulfillment of the above pledge culminated in the sacrifice of Ishmael who participated with Abraham to surrender his life to the will of God. Abraham was not, therefore, alone to fulfill the said commitment because Ishmael was undoubtedly the other participant with him.

The Lord God, therefore, appreciated the submission of Abraham as well as Ishmael in the following words:

**فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَاهُ لِلْجَنَّةِ - وَقَاتَلَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَأْبُرَاهِيمَ - قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ
الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَنَّاكَ تَعْزِيزِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ - إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ**

[103] "So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), [104] We called out to him "O Abraham! [105] "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. [106] For this was obviously a trial- (Al-Qur'an: 037.103-106 [As-Saaffat])

The promise made by Abraham, vide verse 2:131, and by Ishmael 37:102 stood fulfilled and accepted graciously by the Lord. This, therefore, leaves no doubt that the other participant in the sacrifice as per verse 2:124 was no one except Ishmael who had always been participating with Abraham in the covenant and in most of his virtuous deeds. The same has been certified by the Lord in the following:-

**وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَقَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمَّا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامٍ إِلَّا إِرَاهِيمَ مُصَلِّي
وَعَهِنْدَى إِلَى إِلَهِ إِرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهَرَا بَيْتَنِي لِلظَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرَّاجِعِينَ
السُّجُود**

"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).

**وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِلَهِ إِرَاهِيمَ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ رَبَّنَا تَقْبِلُ مِنَ إِلَكَ 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: [Al-Baqara] 2:125-127)

The promise was accomplished by the participation of the son who had vowed to be ready to forebear (من الصابرين) and also who had promised to show patience and constancy in the ordeal. The son, offered as an oblation to God, has been clearly identified in the verses as follow:

1)

وَإِذْ كُرِّزَ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

"Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet." (Al-Qur'an: [Maryam] 19:54)

After pin-pointing Ishmael as ('صادق الوعد' (true to his promise), the Almighty has also identified him as 'من الصابرين' i.e. among those who exercise patience and show constancy.

2)

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكَفْلِ كُلُّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"And (remember) Isma'il, Idris, and Zul-kifl, all (men) of

constancy and patience;" (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Anbiya] 21:85)

God has thus clearly singled out Ishmael as 'true to his promise' and 'ready to suffer and forbear', and the one who fulfilled the vow as per last part of the verse given below:

3)

فَلَمَّا كَبَغَ مَعْهُ السَّعْيُ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى
قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعُلْ مَا تُؤْمِنُ مُسْتَجِلُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, **if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!**" Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:102)

This, therefore, proves conclusively that the son destined to be sacrificed was Ishmael; and not Isaac in any case.

We pointed out earlier that the Bible has attributed passiveness, frailty and many other debilities to Isaac. As against this, the Qur'an has exalted Isaac as a prophet among the most righteous (Al-Qur'an 21:72, 29:27) and a man of power and insight (Al-Qur'an 38:45) who was also endowed with wisdom (Al-Qur'an 15:33). We, therefore, observe that the good news about prophet-hood, righteousness, wisdom, knowledge suggest maturity or even old age of the person concerned. In addition to the above, the good news about the birth of Isaac along with the birth of his son Jacob (Verse 21:72) eliminates any possibility of the sacrifice of Isaac in the early age because Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old.

As compared to Isaac, Ishmael has been signified as حليم i.e. the son 'ready to suffer and forebear. God also eulogized him as صادق الوعد i.e. the one 'true to his promise' (Al-Qur'an 19:54) because he willingly prostrated his forehead for the sacrifice before the Lord (Al-Qur'an 37:103). The appellations of حليم as well as صادق الوعد, pertain

only to Ishmael which befittingly apply to the victim of sacrifice.

Although there exists a dispute between the people of book about the person offered for sacrifice yet they all agree that Abraham was the primary person subjected to the test and trial by the Lord. According to the Qur'an, Abraham had the vision that he was sacrificing his first born son. Taking the vision as a commandment from the Lord, he immediately proceeded to submit before the will of God by attempting to sacrifice his son. God, therefore, eulogized him to be true to fulfill his dream about the sacrifice (37:105).

The first part of the verse 103 فلما اسلما means '**when they both i.e. Ibrahim and Ishmael, surrendered themselves before the Lord**'.

The word اسلم has its root in سلم which means tanning, saluting, submitting, cultivating peace or friendship, peace, safety, and health etc. (*John Richardson Dictionary Persian, Arabic, and English*, London 1829 reprint Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore, Pakistan 1998). The word Muslim (مسلم) denotes 'a person who submits to the will of God. The root of Muslim is Islam. The word سلم (Salem) meaning peace is usually pronounced as 'Shalom' by the Israelites and Jerusalem the principle city centre of the Israelites derived its name from the same root. All this shows that the Lord God had ordained the religion of Islam for mankind which means peace as well as absolute submission to the will of God. We, therefore, find in the Qur'an that:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُخْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةً إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا
وَأَتَحْنَنَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا

"Who can be better in religion than **one who submits his whole self to Allah**, does good, and **follows the way of Abraham** the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend."

(Al-Qur'an: [An-Nisa] 4:125)

Abraham, therefore, said:

إِنِّي وَجَهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah." (Al-Qur'an [Al-Anaam] 6:79)

In response to the commandment of the Lord (as per 2:131), Abraham prayed to the Lord in the following words:

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعُلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ
عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَابُ 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: [Al-Baqara] 2:128)

It transpires from the above that absolute submission to the will of Allah had always been the primary obligation of the creatures of the Lord. As such, only those who surrender themselves to the will of the Lord can be called Muslims in the true sense of the word. Since the will of God is expressed mainly through His law, hence, a true Muslims must obey all the commandments (Law) of the Lord without any hesitation or complaints against Him. The study of the history of the Israelites, however, shows that most of them have been behaving in the way of non-Muslims simply because they have been disobeying the commandments of the Lord besides complaining against Moses and rebelling against the Lord. This was so because the Israelites were stiff-necked people who usually assigned priority to their own desires than submitting wholeheartedly to the will of God. They did not tolerate even to share the God of the universe with others. The God worshiped by them was only the Lord God of Israel while other nations had their own gods who were lesser Gods as compared to the God of Israel. Similarly, the Israelites projected themselves as the chosen people of God and denied blessings of the Lord for any other people in the world. The sanctifying grace of the sacrifice of Ishmael was, therefore, denied on the same

ground. The story of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:9-21) on flimsy grounds expresses the same bias of the Israelites against Ishmaelites. In spite of clear-cut evidence in the Bible, they refused to accept Ishmael as the first born and the legitimate son of Abraham. In their tenacity to assert superiority of the Israelites, they even refused to accept the work of God who made Ishmael the first born of Abraham. Similarly, the expressed will of God i.e. the Law of inheritance was also not acceptable to them. Hence, to make the Genesis accord with the wishes of the Israelites they depicted Sarah in a manner not befitting with the most virtuous matriarch of the believers. As such, if Sarah had actually behaved in the manner as described in the Genesis then, instead of submitting to the will of God, she rebelled against the Law of the Lord. As such, the specially invented commandment from Lord i.e. "*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 21:12) cannot be relied upon because it nullified the work of God besides abrogating the unchanging and universal law of the Lord. Even otherwise the Genesis shows Sarah as a greedy person with the earnest desire to make Isaac the sole inheritor of the entire material wealth Abraham at any cost. In view of this it is not plausible to think that the selfish lady who had violated the Law of the Lord to make Isaac the sole inheritor of Abraham could agree to sacrifice Isaac leaving the entire inheritance of Abraham solely for Ishmael whom she had cruelly thrown to death in the desert.

ISLAM AND THE FIRST MUSLIM

The core of God's covenant with man has always been the absolute and unconditional submission on the part of man to the will of one and the only Lord God of the worlds as conveyed through His prophets. It has, therefore, been mandatory for mankind to follow the guidance received through their respective prophets and to follow the said

prophets as a role model in all walks of life. God, therefore, stressed more and more on obedience to his commandments than any sacrifice or a blood offering, isolated from the wholehearted submission of man to His will. Being the sole creator and sustainer of the universe, God obligates His creatures to worship Him and Him alone, assigning no partners with Him. Sacrifice must, therefore, be considered a part of man's humble submission to the Lord. We find no sin offering prior to Moses. As such, the theory of a saving sacrifice had no existence prior to St. Paul's interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus in the said manner. The Lord has always been very kind and merciful towards his creation and He repeatedly assured forgiveness of all the sins to those who sincerely repent of their misdeeds and turn to the Lord wholeheartedly and do good in accordance with the teachings of the prophets. There is no other savoir except the Lord and it is only He, Who forgives the past sins of all who seek His mercy and forgiveness by adopting righteous path following the footsteps of the prophets. Unless and until submission to the will of the Lord becomes the first priority of men, human beings cannot claim themselves to be the people of God nor can they deserve any mercy, patronage, or gratification from Him. We, therefore, find that the word of God in the Qur'an has stressed Abraham's submission to the will of the Lord again and again. The episode of sacrifice has, therefore, been described as a culmination of Abraham's self surrender to the commandments of the almighty. God, therefore, eulogized the devotion of Abraham, blessed him abundantly and left his tradition in the succeeding generations of Abraham to inherit the blessings promised through Abraham.

The main theme, therefore, lies in the word اسلم i.e. surrender yourself to the will of the Lord. No one can become a true believer in the Lord unless submission to the will of Lord becomes the first priority of his life. Abraham is, therefore, a unique model illustrating complete submission to the Lord and as such, he was the first human being who

had committed himself by saying:- "اَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ" (I bow my will to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe). He was the first person to declare himself as a Muslim and it was he who named all his followers in the way of the Lord as Muslims. God has advised the believers as under:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًا وَلَا نَصَارَائِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ

"Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah." (Al-Qur'an: 3.67)

To remind the people of the Book, therefore, the Lord God asks them that:-

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شَهَادَةً إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْبَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي
قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ أَبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ
مُسْلِمُونَ

"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, 002.133 (Al-Baqara [The Cow])

The same message we find from Joseph – the son of Jacob – as detailed in the following verse:

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ أَبَائِي، إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ أَنَّهُمْ النَّاسُ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ - يَا
صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَلَا رَبُّكُمْ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

[38] "**And I follow the ways of my fathers, - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;** and never could we attribute any partners whatever to Allah: that (comes) of the grace of Allah to us and to mankind: yet most men are not grateful. [39] "O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One Allah, Supreme and Irresistible? Al-Qur'an, 012.038-039 (Yusuf [Joseph])

It was not only for the prophets like Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Jesus to follow Abraham but even the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was also advised in the following words:

قُولُوا أَمْنًا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزَلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزَلَ إِلَيْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ
وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا
نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ وَمِنْهُمْ وَلَخْنَ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

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: [Al-Baqara] 2:136)

The Prophet, therefore, declared as under:

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةً آتَانِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشَرِّكَ بِاللَّهِ وَمِنْ
شَيْءٍ كَيْلَكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

"And I follow the ways of my fathers,- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and never could we attribute any partners whatever to Allah: that (comes) of the grace of Allah to us and to mankind: yet most men are not grateful. (Al-Qur'an: 012.037-038 [Yusuf] 12:37-38)

God also declared that Abraham was neither a Judaist nor a Christian but a staunch Muslim. God ordained that people must believe in all the revelations to the prophets, like Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and others; and must not create any discrimination between them. It has also been clarified that anyone who desires some other religion than Islam (the religion of all the prophets) the same will not be acceptable to the Lord, and such people will be the worst losers in the mankind:

فُلْ أَمْنًا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزَلَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى

وَعَيْسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا خُنُوكَهُ
 مُسْلِمُونَ - وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ غَيْرُ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلْ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي
 الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)." If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).

(Al-Qur'an: 003.084-085 [Aal-E-Imran] 3:84-85)

The guidance from the Lord, therefore, stresses on the straight path towards Allah following the footsteps of Abraham by adopting good deeds; some of which have been recorded in the verses quoted below. It was, therefore, imperative for mankind that they must follow the legacy of Abraham which he left for his descendants stressing especially that they must live by the faith of Islam. It was Abraham who named his followers as Muslims. The same name was adopted by Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) who will be a witness against the believers while the believers will be witness against rest of the mankind. As such, all are advised to offer their prayers and give alms in the way of the Lord, the Protector and also the best one to help the human beings.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكِعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبِّكُمْ وَافْعُلُوا الْخَيْرَ
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ - وَجَاهُهُوَ فِي اللَّهِ حَقًّا جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ
 عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حِرْجٍ مَّلَأَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ
 قَبْلِهِ وَفِي هَذَا لَيَكُونُ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
 فَاقْبِلُوهُ الصَّلَاةَ وَأَتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَغْتَصِبُوهُ بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مُؤْلَكُمْ فَيَقُولُ الْمُؤْلَكُ وَقِيمَتُ
 النَّصِيرِ

"O ye who believe! bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that ye may prosper. And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; **it is the cult of your father Abraham.** **It is He Who has named you Muslims,** both

before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and **hold fast to Allah!** He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help! (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Hajj] 22:77-78)

The word of God, as above, is self explanatory and it has very clearly established that the religion of God has always been Islam, and he requires of human beings to be Muslims (i.e. those who submit to the will of the Lord). This was the message that Abraham gave to his sons and also to Jacob that they should not die except as the Muslims.

**وَصَّىٰهُمْ بِنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبَ يَا أَبَيَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الَّذِينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ
إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ**

"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 2:132)

BLOOD RELATION CANNOT BE THE BASIS OF SALVATION

God told the people of the book that:

**إِنَّ أَوَّلَ النَّاسِ يَلِتَّرَاهِيمَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّيْمَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ**

"Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Prophet and those who believe: And Allah is the Protector of those who have faith."

(Al-Qur'an: [Aal-E-Imran] 3:68)

The above verses dispel all misgivings regarding the concept of any primacy or salvation based on some blood relation with Abraham or other prophets of the Lord. The Qur'an is extremely clear on the above subject. It states:

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّئْنَا فِي صُنْفِ مُوسَىٰ - وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَقَىٰ - أَلَا تَرُوْزُ وَأَرْزُوهُ وَرُزُوهُ أَخْرَىٰ
- وَأَنَّ لَيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ - وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سُوقٌ يُرَىٰ - ثُمَّ نُجَزِّأُهُ أَجْزَاءٍ
الْأُوْفَىٰ

[36] "Nay, is he not acquainted with what is in the Books of Moses- [37] And of Abraham who fulfilled his engagements?- [38] Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; [39] That man can have nothing but what he strives for; [40] That (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight: [41] Then will he be rewarded with a reward complete;"

(Al-Qur'an: [An-Najm] 53:36-41)

We find certain examples given by the Qur'an which makes it clear that a mere blood relation is of no use in the salvation of a man. Only those who follow the faith and the good examples of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others will be considered next of kin to them. We can elucidate the same by giving some examples from the Qur'an:

At the time of the deluge, Noah, a great prophet, could not help his son who was not faithful and was among the evil doers. The Qur'an, therefore, states that:-

"At length, behold! there came Our command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth! We said: "Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female, **and your family - except those against whom the word has already gone forth**,- and the Believers." but only a few believed with him. (Al-Qur'an 11:40)

Eventually, when the son of Noah refused to accompany Noah, he was overwhelmed by the water:

45 "And Noah called upon his Lord, and said: "O my Lord! surely my son is of my family! and Thy promise is true, and Thou art the justest of Judges!" 46 He said: "**O Noah! He is not of thy family: For his conduct is unrighteous.** So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge! I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant!" 47 Noah said: "O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge. And unless thou forgive me and have Mercy on me, I should indeed be lost!" (Al-Qur'an, 11.45-47)

This clearly establishes that those whose conduct is unrighteous cannot claim any kinship with the prophets. Similarly, the unrighteous and the rebellious among the

Israelites cannot be counted in the family of Abraham. The Qur'an elucidates the same in the following:-

"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 2:124)

The point has been elaborated further in the Qur'an as reproduced below:

10. "Allah sets forth, for an example to the Unbelievers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lut: they were (respectively) under two of our righteous servants, **but they were false to their (husbands), and they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but were told: "Enter ye the Fire along with (others) that enter!"**

Al-Qur'an, 66:10

We also learn from the Qur'an that the father of Abraham was an idolater. He rebuked Abraham for opposing idolatry and even stoned him to death unless he gets far away from him. Hence, finding no prospects to stay at Ur or to preach the word of God, Abraham decided to leave his native place. While departing from his father: Abraham said to him: *"Peace be on thee: I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness: for He is to me Most Gracious".* (Al-Qur'an 19:47). It was, therefore, to fulfill his promise with his father that he prayed to the Lord as recorded by the Qur'an:-

"And Abraham prayed for his father's forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him: for Abraham was most tender-hearted, forbearing. (Al-Qur'an 9:114)

This reaffirms the fact that the transgressors against the commandments of the Lord are enemies of the God who's relationship to the prophets cannot save them from the retribution in the hereafter.

In contrast to the foregoing, Almighty Allah has given the example of the wife of the Pharaoh who was saved by the Lord due to her own righteousness, and her relation with the Pharaoh did not harm her:

11 "And Allah sets forth, as an example to those who believe the wife of Pharaoh: Behold she said: "O my Lord! Build for me, in nearness to Thee, a mansion in the Garden, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those that do wrong"; (Al-Qur'an, 66:11)

It is, therefore, clear that blood relation or race has nothing to do with sanctity or salvation. Anyone from any place, race, or region is acceptable to God provided he obeys all the commandments of the Lord. The pride of Israel based on tracing their blood line from Abraham, therefore, makes them no exception to the universal law of the Lord.

The very next verse of the Sura Tahir gives the examples of Maryam who has been taken among the devout servants of the Lord on the basis of her own chastity and firm belief in the words of the Lord:

"And Mary the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants)." (Al-Qur'an: 66:12)

All this shows that only faith in one and the only Lord God of the universe and good deeds following the footsteps of the prophets is the sure way to the salvation of man. The only thing to be taken in to account will be the personal righteousness and the conduct in the footsteps of the prophets. The verdict of God to this effect is loud and clear:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِذَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ ذَرَّةٍ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُورًا وَقَبَّلَنَا إِلَيْنَا تَعْرَفُوا
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ مَّنْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَتَقَاءُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَمِيدٌ

"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 49:13)

In the verse quoted above, the Lord God has made it clear that all human beings were created from a single pair and the families and the tribes are made only for recognition of the people. Hence, belonging to a particular tribe or a bloodline does not mean any supremacy or meanness of an individual with the Lord. Only he who is most righteous is the most honorable with the Lord.

We also note that the word اتقاک used in the verse quoted above is from root تقوی which means 'fear of God' or piety. Allama Asad in his commentary titled '*The Message of the Qur'an*' has rendered it as God consciousness which essentially helps to keep the man on the straight path. Hence, personal faith in the oneness of the creator and obedience to all his commandments following in the steps of the prophets is the only way towards salvation. No relationship with any prophet or a saint can save the evildoers unless they turn towards the Lord do good and seek his forgiveness. The Prophet of Islam was, therefore, advised:-

"And admonish thy nearest kinsmen" (Al-Qur'an 26:214)

In this respect, Abu Huraira has narrated that:

"When Allah revealed the Verse: "Warn your nearest kinsmen," Allah's Apostle got up and said, "O people of Quraish (or said similar words)! Buy (i.e. save) yourselves (from the Hellfire) as I cannot save you from Allah's Punishment; O Bani Abd Manaf! I cannot save you from Allah's Punishment, O Safiya, the Aunt of Allah's Apostle! I cannot save you from Allah's Punishment; O Fatima bint Muhammad! Ask me anything from my wealth, but I cannot save you from Allah's Punishment." (Sahih Bukhari, Vol 4, Book 51, Number 16)

There is another episode reported by Aisha the wife of the Holy Prophet:

"The people of Quraish worried about the lady from Bani Makhzum who had committed theft. They asked, "Who will intercede for her with Allah's Apostle?" Some said, "No one dare to do so except Usama bin Zaid the beloved one to Allah's Apostle." When Usama spoke about that to Allah's Apostle Allah's Apostle said, (to him), "Do you try to intercede for somebody in a case connected with Allah's Prescribed Punishments?" Then he

got up and delivered a sermon saying, "What destroyed the nations preceding you, was that if a noble amongst them stole, they would forgive him, and if a poor person amongst them stole, they would inflict Allah's Legal punishment on him. By Allah, if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad stole, I would cut off her hand." (Sahih Bukhari, Vol 4, Book 56, Number 681)

Abu Huraira has also reported from the prophet as under:-

"The Prophet said, "O Bani 'Abd Munaf! Buy yourselves from Allah; O Bani 'Abdul-Muttalib! Buy yourselves from Allah; O mother of Az-Zubair bin Al-Awwam, the aunt of Allah's Apostle, and O Fatima bint Muhammad! Buy yourselves from Allah, for I cannot defend you before Allah. You (both) can ask me from my property as much as you like." (Sahih Bukhari, Vol 4, Book 56, Number 728:

THE COVENANT WAS MADE AT MAKKAH & NOT IN CANAAN

It is pertinent to note here that dispute among the people of the book exists only about the name of the victim of the sacrifice. As regards the main figure subjected to the test and trial by the Lord, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims agree that it was undoubtedly Abraham the common father in faith of all the three extant revealed religions. The sacrifice being commonly accepted tradition is the legacy of Abraham to be followed by all the 'People of Book'. Matter of real importance, therefore, is not the particular person offered for the sacrifice but the episode of Abraham's self-less surrender to the will of God. If Israelites claim to be the only descendants and followers of Abraham, they should have continued to revive the faith of Abraham and to commemorate all his religious traditions including the sacrifice. If it was Isaac who was ransomed from the sacrifice the Israelites should have commemorated the episode as thanks giving to the Lord who had graciously redeemed Isaac without whom there could be no Israelites at all. Queerly enough, the Israelites continue to pretend as the only descendants of Abraham to claim the sanctifying grace of the sacrifice of Isaac but refuse to follow their traditions. They, perhaps, think that

mere insertion of the name of Isaac in the Genesis 22:2 is enough to establish their spiritual elevation over others besides confining all the blessings of the Lord to the Israelites. We, however, believe that the said insertion is tantamount to the self-confession of guilt of the Israelites. Those who knowingly go astray from the way of Abraham can be termed as infidels and liable to be punished by the Lord accordingly.

Reverting to the original theme, we find that God included Ishmael with Abraham when He said فلما اسلما i.e. when they both submitted to the will of the Lord. As such, on their unconditional submission to the Lord, they both were considered as Muslims and Islam became the religion of the followers of Abraham and Ishmael in Arabia, and sacrifice was also made there.

We also note that the verse given below clearly refers to Makkah which has remained the center of assembly and place of worship for the Arabs and others ever-since the time of Abraham and Ishmael:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَقَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمَّا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى
وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتَنَا لِلظَّاهِيرَةِ وَالْعَاجِزِينَ وَالرُّجُعِ
السُّجُود

"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). (2:125)

This shows that the covenant with Abraham was made at Makkah where Ishmael had been participating with Abraham in his virtuous deeds. As regards Isaac, the Bible as well as the Qur'an has not shown him participating in the covenant or other tests and trials of Abraham.

TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH

We find that the word of God, as per the verse Al-Qur'an 2:125 quoted above, stands completely fulfilled as detailed below.

The empty wilderness around the ancient house of the Sovereign Lord, changed into the greatest place of assembly of mankind, ever since the walls of Kaaba were raised by Abraham and Ishmael there.

The Haram (the limits of the sanctuary) has always remained place of safety for the people.

That since the time of Abraham, the house of Allah at Makkah has remained the greatest place of worship on Earth where millions of people continue to worship the Lord 24 hours throughout the year.

The verse, given above, also contains the commandment of the Lord for Abraham, his descendants, and followers to adopt the station of Abraham at Makkah as a place of prayer. Although a branch the progeny and followers of Abraham conformed to the said directive by facing towards the same house of the Lord yet the Jews as well as the Christians had no regard for the same.

The second part of the verse contains part of the covenant God made with Abraham and Ishmael, and it was that they should keep the house of the Lord sanctified for those who compass around it, or use it for Ahtekaf (retreat to a mosque for certain period of time) or who bow and prostrate themselves in prayer before Allah. Other obligations for Muslims under the covenant are also mentioned in verses Al-Qur'an 2:128, 131-133, 36, 3:68, 84-85, 4:125, 12:37-38, 22:77-78 etc.

It is pertinent to note here that the covenant was almost unilateral in the sense that it obliged Abraham, Ishmael, their followers and descendants to submit themselves to the directives of the sovereign lord without any reciprocal binding on the Lord. Secondly, it contained only directions of the master to his slaves. The Lord, therefore, enjoined Abraham and Ishmael to facilitate and promote worship of the Lord. Unlike the covenant given in Gen 15:5, 7 and 18,

it did not assure any material benefits such as giving innumerable descendants to Abraham to hold the land of Canaan forever. The covenant consisted of directions and guidance from the Lord for Abraham and his followers for their moral uplift and righteous conduct which could ensure their salvation and well being in the hereafter. The covenant made at Makkah did not contain any allurement of temporal gains for Abraham, Ishmael, and their descendants. No blessings or sanctification was assured to their descendants based merely on blood relation with Abraham and Ishmael.

It is, however, heartening to note that Ishmael pleased the Lord, by fulfilling his obligations, as certified by the Lord in the following verse:

"Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: **He was (strictly) true to what he promised**, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet. He used to enjoin on his people Prayer and Charity, and **he was most acceptable in the sight of his Lord.**" (Al-Qur'an: 19: 54-55)

It was, therefore, Ishmael who was made Rasūl (a messenger) and also a prophet. No wonder, that only the '**most acceptable in the sight of the Lord**' was the person most acceptable for the sacrifice.

The sacrifice of Ishmael was the greatest test of the submission of Abraham and Ishmael to the will of God. Factually, the entire life of Abraham was a life of continuous devotion and sacrifice depicting selfless submission to the will of God. The sanctifying deed of sacrifice cannot, therefore, be isolated from the overall devout obedience of the patriarch to the commandments of the Lord. Worship of one and the only Lord God of the universe and unflinching obedience to all his commandments was, therefore, the actual legacy of Abraham for his descendants. As such, only those who follow the faith and traditions of Abraham can expect blessings of the Lord while the evildoers among his progeny are not covered by the promise of the Lord.

As said earlier, most of the episodes establishing the traditions of Abraham occurred at Makkah where they always survived as living traditions of Abraham. Notable among the same were raising the walls of Kaaba and declaring it as the house of the Lord. All rituals about prayers, *Aitekaf*, *Tawaaf* and *Saee* belong to the same sanctuary. Similarly, *Hajj*, *sacrifice*, *Rami* and drinking the water of *Zamzam* are the traditions of Abraham pertaining to Makkah. We also believe that the covenant with Abraham did not take place at any other place than the house of the Lord where Ishmael was shown as participant with Abraham. Since, due to his dedication to the Lord, Ishmael was separated from his family to stand before the house of the Lord right from his suckling period, therefore, we find no evidence that he was ever taken back to Canaan. As such, the covenant with the Lord must have been formalized at the house of the Lord at Makkah which also included circumcision of Ishmael at the age of 13 years. Hence, the so called covenant of circumcision did not take place at Canaan nor Abraham offered his only son for the sacrifice there. Factually, no covenant was made with Abraham except the one at Makkah as asserted emphatically in the Qur'an 2:125. It was at Makkah that Ishmael succeeded Abraham as a *Rasul* i.e. messenger of the Lord. The first Muslim community consisting of the followers of Abraham including the descendants from twelve sons of Ishmael started following the path of Abraham of Abraham aside from inviting the Arab tribes towards the same.

Due to the death of Hagar, Ishmael had to marry at an early age. He got his twelve sons in due course but definitely even before the birth of Jacob (Israel). Abraham had also been visiting Makkah occasionally due to which Ishmael and his descendants continued to receive guidance from him. As such, the descendants of Abraham at *Makkah* had a fare chance to follow the faith and traditions of Abraham without any break. Their existed no people like the Canaanites or others to attract the descendants of Abraham at Makkah to worship other Gods. They were neither overcome by the invaders nor forced to disperse to

other places. As such the faith and traditions of Abraham at Makkah had a lasting effect on the Arabs who continued to visit Kaaba for worship of the Lord and for Hajj and sacrifice there even up to the advent of the holy Prophet (PBUH). As compared to this, God did not declare any sanctuary in Canaan nor did Isaac, Jacob or his descendants have any peaceful and undisturbed settlement at a single place there. Eventually, with the emigration of the Israelites to Egypt and their long-lasting slavery under the Egyptians, they forgot every thing about the life, the teachings of faith and the traditions of Abraham. So much so, that they did not even remember the name of the God worshiped by Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. It was, perhaps, long after the death of Moses that the Israelites composed Genesis by intermingling various verbal traditions and stories related by the Arab merchants visiting Palestine from time to time. Besides containing certain mythological events of creation and deluge of Noah based on the old traditions of the Babylonians, the Genesis has also incorporated certain stories of the covenant, the circumcision and the sacrifice after receiving the same from the Arabs and other people around them. To arrive at the truth, we shall throw further light on various aspects pertaining to faith and traditions of Abraham at Makkah.

ABRAHAM; THE LEADER OF MANKIND

As observed earlier, the main theme had been the devout obedience of Abraham to the commandments of the Lord and his most righteous conduct quoted as a role model for all the people after him. The Lord had certified that:-

وَلَمَّا أَتَيْنَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِكَلَمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ
 وَمَنْ ذُرِّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنْعَلُ 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: 2:124)

We, therefore, observe that it was due to the fulfillment of all the commandments of the Lord culminating in the sacrifice of Ishmael that the Lord amply rewarded Abraham and also declared him 'leader of the mankind'. When he pleaded the same for his offspring, the Lord said '*But my promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.*' As such, the evil doers among the progeny of Abraham stand excluded from the blessings of the Lord as per verdict of the Lord quoted above.

In continuation with the above verses 125 to 133 of Sura 2 show that Abraham was a Muslim and the same was the religion prescribed for all his progeny. **The main center of Abrahamic religion, however, was the ancient house of the Lord at Makkah**, and it was not Jerusalem which developed as a center for the Israelites about a thousand years after Abraham. It is evident from the verses recorded above that the Lord desired the mankind to follow the faith and religion of Abraham. God also made it clear that nearest to kin with Abraham were those who followed the righteous path of Abraham. Those who are evil-doers cannot claim any blessings or protection under the blessings conferred on Abraham (2:124). Thus, no boastful claims about the kinship or descent from Ishmael or Isaac can give any credit to those who go astray from the straight path and righteous traditions of Abraham.

PRAYERS OF ABRAHAM FOR HIS DESCENDANTS AT MAKKAH

In continuation of the above, we give hereunder the meanings of a few more verses of the same Sura of the Quran to show that Abraham and Ishmael were the participants in construction of Kaaba; at Makkah where Abraham implored the Lord for the following:

"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-Quran: 2:126-129).

From the above, we find that Abraham requested the Lord that He might:

Make this (Makkah) a city of peace.

Feed its people with fruit.

Accept the service of raising the walls of the house of the Lord.

Make Ibrahim, Ishmael, and their descendants as Muslims.

Show them their place for celebration of (due) rites.

Turn unto them in mercy, because the Lord God was oft-returning most merciful.

Raise a Rasul (messenger) from amongst their own people, who may rehearse thy signs, teach them the scripture and wisdom, and may sanctify them.

The acceptance of all the aforesaid prayers is manifest physically as well as spiritually in the history and practice prevailing in Makkah and throughout the Muslim world.

The theme, starting from 2:125 revolves around Abraham and Ishmael and continues as under:

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.

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." (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Baqara] 2:130-131)

THE SACRIFICE; AS LEGACY OF THE ABRAHAMIC FAITH

The verse فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَأَلَّهُ لِجِبِينٍ (37:103) needs to be considered again. The first part is فَلَمَّا اسْلَمَا i.e. 'when they both (Abraham and Ishmael) submitted to Allah' is the fulfillment of promise made by Abraham in response to commandment of God to submit before Him (2:131), and Abraham had immediately responded by saying اسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ i.e. 'I submit to the will of the Lord and Cherisher of the universe'. The same was also evident from the compliance of Ishmael to the will of God because he discharged his liabilities as promised by him. When Abraham inquired from him about his willingness to be sacrificed, he said:-

"Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!" (Al-Qur'an 37:102)

Subsequently, when Ishmael laid prostrate to be sacrificed, the Lord appreciated his devotion in the following manner:-

"Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: He was(strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet." (Al-Qur'an 19:54)

"And (remember) Isma'il, Idris, and Zul-kifl, all (men) of constancy and patience" (Al-Qur'an 2185)

It was Abraham who was the first person to pronounce himself as a 'Muslim' (مسلم). The next four verses also show that Abraham clearly advised all his sons saying "die not except in the state of submission" i.e.; مسلمون; Jacob also did so as we find below:

وَصَّىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبَ يَا يَتَّبِعَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الَّذِينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ
إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

"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: [Al-Baqara] 2:132)

Instead of following the legacy of Abraham, the Jews and the Christians began to boast about their descent from Abraham which according to their pretension gave them superiority over all the people besides ensuring them salvation and exemption from the torment in the Hell. The Qur'an, however, exposes futility of their boastful claims in the following verses:

وَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ تِلْكُ أَمَانِيْهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ . بَلِّيْ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرٌ
عَنَّ دِرِّيْدٍ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَزَّوْنَ

[111] And they say: "None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian." Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful." [112] Nay,-whoever submits His whole self to Allah and is a doer of good,- He will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Al-Qur'an, 002.111-112 (Al-Baqara [The Cow])

And also the verses:

وَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا مَعْدُودَةُ قُلْ أَتَحْكُمُمْ عَنَّا فَلَمَّا رَأَيْتُمْ فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ
الَّهُ أَعْهَدَ لَكُمْ أَمْرًا فَلَا تَعْلَمُونَ - بَلَى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَاتٍ وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ
خَطِيئَاتُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ أَخْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ - وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَخْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

[80] And they say: "The Fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days:" Say: "Have ye taken a promise from Allah, for He never breaks His promise? or is it that ye say of Allah what ye do not know?" [81] Nay, those who seek gain in evil, and are girt round by their sins,- they are companions of the Fire: Therein shall they abide (For ever). [82] But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the Garden: Therein shall they abide (For ever). (Al-Qur'an, 2:80-82)

God, therefore, exposes their claim and advises his prophet as under:

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَبِيبًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنْ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ

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." (Al-Qur'an 2:135)

The verses given above are self explanatory but the verse 135 tells us that the Judaists and the Christians say "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided to salvation", to which Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: "Nay! (I would rather) the Religion of Abraham the True, and he joined not gods with Allah".

It is, therefore, evident that Abraham had bequeathed Islam to Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and also to his followers and the descendants. He called himself *Muslim* and his followers are also known as Muslims. The said name denotes absolute submission to the will of the Lord. Subsequently, however, there were those among the descendants of Abraham who, instead of surrendering their will to the Lord,

followed their own will and named themselves Judaists which alludes to their ethnicity than their faith. Others called themselves Christians on the basis of being the worshipers of Jesus whom they took as a God-head against his own teachings as a son of man and a humble salve as well as Prophet of Allah. It is, therefore, evident that those who served their self-interests, ethnicity or traditions of pagans, cannot share the blessings promised to those descendants and followers of Abraham who submit themselves to the will of Allah.

The Rites Of Sacrifice

We mentioned earlier that while raising the foundations of the house of the Lord at Makkah (2:126), Abraham and Ishmael entreated the Lord to teach them and show them the place for the celebration of the rites (of sacrifice) as is clear from the words مَنَسَكٌ . وَارْنَا مَنَاسِكُنَا . The word نَسْكٌ, used in verse 128, has its root in نَسَكَ which means blood of a victim, a frequented place, being religious, devout, virtuous, and dedicating or sacrificing to God (*John Richardson Dictionary Persian, Arabic, and English*, London 1829). That the word نَسَكَ means sacrifice is also clear from the following verses of the Quran.

فَلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَعَحْيَاتِي وَمَهْمَاتِي بِلِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say: "Truly, my prayer and **my service of sacrifice**, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds: (6:162)

The Qur'an also directed the holy prophet to declare that:-

قُلْ إِنَّمَا هَدَى رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيمًا مُلَةً إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ
وَمِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Say: "Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight,- a religion of right,- the path (trod) by Abraham the true in Faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah." (6:161)

لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذِكْرِ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

No partner hath He: this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His will.(6: 163)

The verses quoted above testify to the fact that the lord guided Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to straight path of Abraham and directed him to say that "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds", and also to declare to be a Muslim first of all. We, therefore, observe that the rites of sacrifice were revealed at Makkah for which Ishmael had joined his father to beseech guidance in respect of worship and sacrifice there. All this happened before the birth of Isaac who was born sometime after the sacrifice and circumcision of Ishmael, and remained domesticated at Canaan, as discussed earlier.

ABRAHAM'S PRAYER FOR A MESSENGER

In the previous chapter, we discussed about the prayer of Abraham for making him and his descendants submissive to the Lord and to teach them the rites of the pilgrimage etc. (Al-Qur'an 2:128). The next verse of the Sura tells us that Abraham prayed to the Lord so that He might raise a messenger from among his progeny in the said area to instruct the people in the Scripture (Qur'an) and wisdom to purify them. The meanings of verse 2:129 are quoted below:

"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: [Al-Baqara] 2:129)

The above verse shows that Abraham had made four solemn prayers to the Lord.

That God might send amongst them a messenger of their own. The prayer was fulfilled with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) at Makkah.

That the said Prophet might rehearse the signs of the Lord to those people.

That the said Prophet might instruct them in the Scripture and wisdom.

That he might purify them.

We find the above prayers of Abraham gracefully granted by Almighty Allah. The main focus of the said prayer had been Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) who restored the original Faith of Abraham i.e. Islam to convert the pagans into Muslims. The Prophet(PBUH) taught them the faith and wisdom of the Quran and purified them from the evils rampant in the society. This guidance, character building, devotion to Allah, and unification of the people led them to become the masters of half of the then civilized world with leadership in knowledge, culture, morality, power, and politics; the like of which had never been seen in the world before them.

The Book, revealed to the said Prophet i.e. the Quran is anineffable and immutable miracle of the Lord. It guides humanity in their moral conduct, worship, and knowledge necessary to dispel all the superstitions, fallacies, and misgivings of man about his own self, about the nature, and about the transcendent attributes of the Sovereign Lord, the one and the only creator and sustainer of the universe.

It was the Prophet commonly referred to as '**that prophet**' or '**he that should come**' (Luke 7:19-20) whom the Israelites were awaiting centuries before his advent, and when John inquired from Jesus 'if he was that prophet' he did not say 'yes' to the inquiry. The Prophet fulfilling all the requirements of the prayer of Abraham, prophecies of Jacob (Gen 49:10 KJV), and prophecies of Moses (vide Deu 18:15-18 and Deu 33:2) was Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) who revolutionized the entire Middle East and Far Eastern areas dispelling darkness, and restoring the pure religion of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and

Jacob there. It's a pity that the Israelites as well as the Christians rebelled against the will of the Lord simply because Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) was not from among Israel, and also because like Abraham, he ascribed no gods besides Allah, the one and the only creator and the master of the universe. The Prophet preached Islam, the Faith of Abraham and the faith of his sons and grandsons; but the Israelites and the Christians were the first to oppose the same. Let us read the word of God about them who turned away from the straight path.

"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. (Al-Qur'an: [The Cow] 2:130)

The next verse means:

"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." (Al-Qur'an: [The Cow] 2:131)

So, this was Ibrahim who submitted himself to the will of the Lord in the act of oblation while the only companion with Him, in the ordeal, was Ishmael. The venue of sacrifice, raising the walls of Kaaba, prayers for making them Muslims, to raise a prophet to teach them the Scripture and wisdom and to purify them; all pertain to Makkah. We also observe that the verse 2:125 clearly tells that the place of assembly and safety for men was Kaaba, and both Ibrahim and Ishmael were assigned the duty to keep it sanctified for the people who came for the worship there. It was this house, for which Abraham prayed to the Lord **to make Makkah, the city of peace and feed its people with fruits**, as we find in verse 126. He prayed to the Lord **to make them (Ishmael and Ibrahim) Muslims, and of their progeny a nation of the Muslims**. They also prayed to the Lord to show them the places and rites of worship and sacrifice. All the prayers were granted at Makkah and all the traditions of Abraham and Ishmael including the sacrifice are kept alive by the Muslims there

since the time of Abraham. As such, mere insertion of '*Isaac*' in Gen 22:2 fails to change the course of history, tradition, and the ground realities persisting since 3,800 years till date. As an everlasting evidence to the place of sacrifice, it has always been kept alive at the same house of the Lord where Abraham had offered his only son for the same.

Before further discussion on the narrative of sacrifice as in Sura As-Saaffat 37, it will be interesting to recall the meanings of two verses of the Qur'an:

"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: [Al-Baqara] 2:132-133)

All this shows that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob enjoined upon their progeny to be Muslims, and to worship the same God whom they worshiped. They never advised them to be Jews or Christians. **If, therefore, the Jews or the Christians intend to share the glory and blessings of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, they must adopt their Faith i.e. Islam.** There is no obstruction before them except the hindrance created by their own prejudices against the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Qur'an due to which they have diverted from the true faith of their forefathers and all the prophets of God after them.

ACCEPTANCE & REWARDS FOR THE SACRIFICE

Previously, we examined verses 100 to 103 of Sura 37 containing the main narrative of the sacrifice. The last

verse i.e. 103 tells us that when both Abraham and Ishmael submitted to the will of the Lord and Abraham laid his son Ishmael prostrate on his forehead for sacrifice, the Lord addressed him, as quoted below:

104. "We called out to him "O Abraham! **105.** "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. **106.** For this was obviously a trial- **107.** And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: **108.** And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:104-108)

The verses 104 and 105 are explicit in their meanings and need no further exposition to grasp their contents. As regards verse 106, it stresses the point that the commandment of the Lord through the vision was a clear-cut test and trial of Abraham. The next verse (i.e. 107) tells us that **God ransomed the son of Ibrahim with a great sacrifice** i.e. a lamb from the Lord. Verse 108 is, however, extremely important which tells us that **God left the said tradition among future generations of Abraham.** As against this, we find that the tradition of Abraham had never been kept alive by the Israelites. The word of God, however, stood fulfilled at Makkah, where the progeny of Abraham and Ishmael had been performing Hajj and the sacrifices each year continuously since the time of Abraham till the advent of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) restored all the traditions to the original pattern of Abraham and the same are celebrated by the Muslims with ever-increasing fervor throughout the world since then. The Muslims throughout the world have sacrificed billions of goats, sheep, cows, and camels in the memory of the sacrifice of Abraham and Ishmael. Since the Israelites or the Christians did not adopt the tradition of Abraham, therefore, they had diverted from the way of Abraham. They, therefore, cannot claim any inheritance of blessings or sanctification from Abraham just by inserting the name of Isaac in Gen 22:2 after the words 'thy only son' because according to the word of God, the tradition had been kept alive in **the later generations of the victim of**

sacrifice. Since the said word of God was fulfilled only in the descendants of Ishmael, therefore, it negates any possibility of Isaac to be the victim of sacrifice.

SALUTATION, APPROBATION AND REWARD FOR ABRAHAM

The verses 109 to 113 of Sura Saaffat contain post-sacrifice commendation and reward for Abraham. The meanings of the same are as under:

"109. Peace and salutation to Abraham!" 110. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. 111. For he was one of our believing Servants. 112. And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a prophet,- one of the Righteous. 113. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls. (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:109-113)

We, therefore, note that the narrative of sacrifice ended in verse 37:105, and thereafter verses 106 to 111 contain the gracious acceptance and approbation as well as blessings of the Lord on Abraham and his descendants. Subsequently, the Lord disclosed the precept that He amply rewards those who do right. In the instant case, the Lord accepted and appreciated the sacrifice made by Abraham and showered his bounteous blessings on him which also included the good news about the birth of Isaac (37:110-112). The said reward was, therefore, given after the sacrifice and not before that. Since Isaac had not been born till the time of sacrifice, therefore, the only son sacrificed by Abraham could be no one except Ishmael. As such, **the Qur'an confirms Ishmael as the victim of sacrifice without naming him. Similarly, Isaac has been excluded from the said sacrifice explicitly by name revealing that the good news about his birth was given as a reward for the sacrifice already made by Abraham.**

ISAAC EXCLUDED FROM THE SACRIFICE

We discussed earlier that due to the most unfavorable circumstances at Ur, Abraham had decided to leave for some other place towards which the Lord might guide him (al-Qur'an 37:99). While departing from his people, Abraham prayed to the Lord to grant him a righteous son (37:100). The Lord graciously responded to the prayer saying فبشرنـه بـغـلام حـلـيم "so we gave him the good news of a son **ready to suffer and forbear**" (37:101). There is no doubt that the good news pertained to the first born of Abraham whom he named Ishmael (God has heard) as an acknowledgement that the Lord had heard the prayer and granted him the son prayed for. God, however, did not spell out the name of the son offered for the sacrifice. Anyhow, the Lord clearly excluded Isaac from the sacrifice because he was not born till then. As against this, the victim of sacrifice i.e. Ishmael was specified qualitatively by ascribing the attribute of حـلـم (forbearance) to him. The subsequent verse (i.e. 37: 102) certifies that the same son was subjected to the sacrifice as soon as he reached the age when he could assist Abraham in his errands. Since the first born son of Abraham was admittedly Ishmael, and Isaac was born 14 years later than him; therefore, Ishmael was the only son of Abraham till the time of the sacrifice. The Bible, too, has specified the victim of sacrifice as the **only son of Abraham at the time of sacrifice** as we find in the Gen 22:2, 12 and 16. As such, the victim of sacrifice must have been Ishmael who was the only son of Abraham till the receipt of the commandment of the sacrifice. **The term 'only son' therefore, excludes Isaac from the sacrifice as he had neither been born till then nor had he been 'the only son' of Abraham at any time during the life of Abraham.**

We also observe that verses 37:99-100 pertain to the prayer of Abraham for a son. The good news about the

birth of Ishmael as a response to the prayer of Abraham has been given only once in the Qur'an in verse 37:101 i.e. "so we gave him the good news of a son **ready to suffer and forbear**". The same son i.e. (37:101) had been the only eligible victim of sacrifice before the Lord.

Verses 37:102-111 pertain to the narrative of sacrifice, its acceptance, approbation and rewards for Abraham. Subsequently, we find the good news about Isaac in verse 112 as quoted below:

وَكَشِّرْتَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

"And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a prophet,- one of the Righteous." (Al-Qur'an: [As-Saaffat] 37:112)

It is evident from the above that the **good news about Isaac also confirmed him as Nabi (Prophet) among the righteous ones.** As such, the prophet-hood as well as righteousness suggests that Isaac must attain maturity because both prophet-hood and righteousness of character require the same. This precludes possibility of Isaac's sacrifice before completion of his mission as a prophet.

As against the good news about the birth of Ishmael given only once in the Qur'an, the good news pertaining to the birth of Isaac has been given at four different places. Hence, two other verses also allude to the mature age of Isaac.

قَالُوا لَا تَوْجُلْ إِلَّا نُبَيِّنُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلَيْهِمْ

"They said: "Fear not! We give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom." (15:53)

فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خَيْفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخْفَ وَبَشِّرُوهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَلَيْهِمْ

(When they did not eat), He conceived a fear of them. They said, "Fear not," and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge. (51:28)

The verses quoted above, foretell the attainment of knowledge and wisdom by Isaac which necessarily need maturity in life. As such, the attainment of the said qualities

in the mature age excludes possibility of the sacrifice of Isaac in the early age. To elucidate the point, we quote a verse from the Qur'an:

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشْدُدَ حُكْمَهَا وَلَذِكْرِ نَعْزِي الْمُخْسِنِينَ

"When Joseph attained His full manhood, We gave him power and knowledge: thus do We reward those who do right." (Al-Qur'an: [Yusuf] 12:22)

This shows that the attribute of righteousness, knowledge and wisdom require full manhood and not an early age as suggested by the narrative of sacrifice. Both the Qur'an and the Bible agree that the victim of sacrifice was almost in the early teens, and had not attained the manhood.

Finally, we quote another verse precluding any possibility of the sacrifice of Isaac upto the birth of Jacob.

"And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed: But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob." (al-Qur'an 11:71)

This suggests Isaac as a domesticated person who was not dedicated to the Lord. Since Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years of age, therefore, there was no possibility of Isaac's sacrifice in the early age.

The last verse (i.e. 71) clearly manifests the **good news of the birth of Isaac along with the good news of Jacob, the son of Isaac**. This leaves no chance for the sacrifice of Isaac before the birth of Jacob. Since Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years (Gen 25:26), **therefore, there could be no chance of the sacrifice of Isaac before he crossed the age of 60 years**. As against this, we understand that the Quran as well as the Bible suggests the sacrifice of the victim, around his teen age. Isaac, therefore, could not be sacrificed in his early age before the fulfillment of the goods news of the birth of Jacob which happened when he was of 60 years.

From the above analysis, it transpires that all the three good news pertaining to the birth of Isaac quoted above, **suggest his maturity of age and prophet-hood** while the fourth one i.e. 11:71 even contains the prediction about

his son Jacob, foretelling Abraham that there was no possibility of his sacrifice in his early age.

Sacrifice was Made before the Birth of Isaac

We learn from the Qur'an that it was subsequent to the fulfillment of the commandment for sacrifice that the Lord God rewarded Abraham with good news about the birth of Isaac.

"And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a prophet, - one of the Righteous." (Al-Qur'an 37:112)

It is evident from the above that Abraham had offered Ishmael his first born and the only son even before the birth of Isaac. The good news about the birth of Isaac was given to Abraham as a reward for his absolute and unconditional submission to the will of God. Even otherwise only the first born belonged to the Lord, therefore, Isaac had never been lawfully eligible to the said sacrifice. As such, there was no possibility of Abraham's violating the law of the Lord only to establish spiritual superiority of the Israelites over the Ishmaelites.

The Only Son Whom You Love So Much

In their eagerness to establish moral superiority and sanctification of Israel over the Ishmaelites, the former claimed that Isaac was the only genuine or legitimate son of Abraham and was, therefore, offered as a sacrifice. The said claim is fallacious as well as misconstrued having no reasonable support for the same. While analyzing the narrative of sacrifice as per the Bible, we discussed the same in detail and concluded that Isaac had never been the only son of Abraham throughout his life. Being the younger son, he also did not qualify for the sacrifice as per law.

Since the Genesis 22:2 identifies the victim of sacrifice as 'thy only son whom thou lovest', therefore, the expositors of the Bible have also tried to prove Isaac as the most beloved son of Abraham. The said claim, however, finds no

support either from the Bible or from the Qur'an. We have already discussed that according to the Bible, Ishmael, and not Isaac, seemed to be the beloved son of Abraham. To refute the pretension of the expositors, we shall try to explain that even according to the Qur'an Isaac was not loved more than Ishmael at any time. We also observe that the good news about the birth of Isaac in the Bible contained an impression of unpleasant surprise, both for Abraham as well as for Sarah. They had neither prayed nor aspired for any child at that stage. The news rather perturbed Abraham so much that he fell prostrate before the Lord and said unto Him: 'O that Ishmael might live before thee' (Gen 17:18). Since Ishmael was the first born of Abraham, therefore, due to his dedication to the Lord, Abraham had already separated him from the family. In the said circumstances, the good news about another son had some hint for the sacrifice of Ishmael. **It was, therefore, due to deep concern of Abraham for Ishmael that the good news about the birth of Isaac was not acceptable to him.** The Qur'an, too, describes the episode giving the same impression. The angels gave good news about the birth of Isaac and of Jacob after him. Sarah's response to the news has been recorded as under:-

وَامْرَأَهُ قَائِمَةً فَضَحِّكَتْ فَبَشَّرَتْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَنْقُوبُ^١ قَالَتْ
يَا وَيْلَتَا أَلِلَّهُدُّوْلَهُ وَأَلِعَجُورُ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنْ هَذَا لَكَفِيلٌ عَجِيبٌ قَالُوا أَتَعْجِبُينَ
مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحْمَنِ اللَّهُ وَرَبِّكُلِّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَّحْمِيدٌ

71. And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed: But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob. (72) She said: "Alas for me! shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!" 73. They said: "Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, o ye people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!" (Al-Qur'an, [Hud] 11:71-73)

This shows that the good news had an unpleasant surprise for Sarah who could hardly believe the same. The angels, therefore, reassure Sarah about the news with the words that she should not wonder over the decree of the Lord. A

similar response of Abraham is found in another place in the Qur'an:

وَنَسِئُهُمْ عَنْ صَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ - إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ
وَجَلُونَ - قَالُوا لَا تَوْجِلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلَيْهِ - قَالَ أَبْشِرْ مُؤْنِي عَلَى أَنْ
مَسْتَنِي الْكِبْرَ فِيمَ تُبَشِّرُونَ - قَالُوا يَبْشِرُكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْقَاطِنِينَ -
قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّ الْأَضَالُونَ

[51] "Tell them about the guests of Abraham.[52] When they entered his presence and said, "Peace!" He said, "We feel afraid of you!"[53] They said: "Fear not! We give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom." [54] He said: "Do ye give me glad tidings that old age has seized me? Of what, then, is your good news?"[55] They said: "We give thee glad tidings in truth: be not then in despair!"[56] He said: "And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?" (Al-Qur'an: [Al-Hijr] 15:51-56)

The above narration is expressive of **an unpleasant surprise even for Abraham** while the angels confirm him of the God's mercy and to shed off despair, if any. Yet another description of the said episode in the Qur'an is as under:

فَأَوْجَسَ وَنَهَمَ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخْفُ وَبَشِّرُوهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَلَيْهِ - فَأَقْبَلَتِ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي
صَرِّهِ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَبُوزٌ عَقِيمُ

[28] "(When they did not eat), He conceived a fear of them. They said, "Fear not," and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge. [29] **But his wife came forward (laughing) aloud: she smote her forehead and said: "A barren old woman!"** (Al-Qur'an: 051.028-029 [Adh-Dhariyat]51:28-29)

The verse 29 above has been translated in the *Holy Qur'an*, (King Fahad Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, Al-Medinah, S.A.), as under:

"But his wife came forward Clamoring: she smote Her forehead and said: "A barren old woman!" (51:29)

The clamoring or striking the face is explicitly an expression of disgust and disbelief on the part of Sarah. In fact, both Sarah and Abraham had neither prayed for Isaac nor aspired for the said son. **As such, the Bible as well as the Qur'an refute St. Paul's claim that Isaac was the son of promise.** St. Paul was, therefore, the first person to create differentiation between Isaac and Ishmael by suggesting that the former was the son of promise while the later was born in the way of flesh like other human beings. We, however, find no scriptural proof for such a differentiation between Isaac and Ishmael. The distinction is baseless and against the nature of creation of the human beings created by the Lord as composite of soul and flesh.

The narrations in the Bible as well as the Qur'an show that both Abraham and Sarah were fully contented with Ishmael without having any desire for another son. As such, the abrupt news about the birth of Isaac was an unpleasant surprise than a delight or relief for the family. Ishmael had been born in response to the earnestly repeated prayers of Abraham. The very name Ishmael (اسمعيل) is expressive of the gratification and acknowledgement from Abraham for the acceptance of his prayers. Ishmael was the first fruit of Abraham's loins, and by the time of sacrifice, he was an ideally grown-up boy in his teens. Moreover, God Himself defined Ishmael as غلام حليم i.e. the son ready to suffer and forbear. Incidentally, the epithet حليم also refutes the allegation of ferocity of temperament or of mocking (Gen 21:9). It also repudiates the narrative of the Bible that '*he (Ishmael) will be against everyone and everyone will be against him*' (Gen 16:12 GNB). We, therefore, cannot rely on such assertions of the Genesis for the reasons given in our article 'History of the Old Testament'. The uncorrupted record of the revelations from the Lord in the Qur'an upholds Ishmael as a steadfast and forbearing son of Abraham, never showing any disobedience to his parents or harshness and maltreatment with anyone else throughout his life. The baseless blemish as in Gen 16:12 is, therefore, incorrect and stands washed off by the Divine Verdict quoted in Al-Qur'an 37:101. Ishmael was, in fact, a docile and obedient son of Abraham and also the beloved one of

the entire family. His quality as حليم was, perhaps, inherited from the unique distinction of Abraham whom the Lord had described twice with the appellation of Haleem as quoted below:-

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّلُهُ مُنِيبٌ

"For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah." (Al-Qur'an: [Hud] 11:75)

And

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتَغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِلَيْهِ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَلُوْلٌ لَهُ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّلُهُ حَلِيمٌ

"And Abraham prayed for his father's forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him: for Abraham was most tender-hearted, forbearing."(Al-Qur'an: [At-Tawba] 9:114)

We, therefore, find that Ishmael was the only other person from mankind sharing the quality of حليم with his father who had been designated as حليم twice in the Qur'an. The Addressee of the epithet 'Haleem' was Abraham being tested and tried by the Lord with the commandment to sacrifice his only son before the Lord. Being the 'son ready to suffer and forbear', only Ishmael could be the victim of sacrifice to participate willingly with Abraham in the episode.

Ishmael Shares many Qualities with Abraham

Aside from sharing the quality of Haleem with his father and also the willing submission for the sacrifice, Ishmael had many other similarities with his great father, some of which we give hereunder:

(i) Abraham was a great prophet and God chose him as امام الناس i.e. 'leader of mankind (in faith)'. He was the first

Muslim and he prayed along with Ishmael for an امة المسلمين, the nation of the Muslims from their progeny. God made Ishmael the first رسول نبی from among the descendants of Abraham (al-Qur'an 19:54). The prophet like Moses promised by the Lord was from among the descendants of Abraham and Ishmael who was raised for guidance of all the mankind.

(ii) Abraham had left his parents, his home, and the people in the way of the Lord; and reached Haran from Ur and Hebron from Haran which was about 1350 km from Ur on that route. Ishmael, too, was separated from his family and stayed at Makkah which was about 1400 km from Hebron.

Both left their nativity for the sake of the Lord. Ishmael, though an infant, was the dedicated one whom Abraham took along with him from Canaan to Makkah to serve there at the house of the Lord.

(iii) According to the Bible, Ishmael was the first participant with Abraham in the covenant of the circumcision and was the first to be circumcised from among his sons.

(iv) Ishmael was the only participant with Abraham in the covenant referred to in the Qur'an in the following:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَقَابِلَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمَّا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامٍ إِلَيْهِمْ مُصَلِّي
وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِي لِلظَّاهِرِينَ وَالْعَاجِزِينَ وَالرَّجَعِ
السُّجُودِ

"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)." (Al-Qur'an, 002.125 (Al-Baqara [The Cow])

(v) Ishmael lent a hand to his father to raise up the foundations of Baitullah (i.e. the first house of the Lord on Earth) which is a place of assembly for all the Muslims throughout the world. The following verse of the Qur'an refers to the same:

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقْبِلُ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

002.127 "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: [Al-Baqara] 2:127)

The above verses show Ishmael as a participant in all the aforesaid good deeds, and it was undoubtedly he, who could be a genuine participant in the trial and fulfillment of the same as referred to in the narrative of sacrifice and also in the Qur'an 2:124.

(vi) It was only Ishmael who had been participating with Abraham in his prayers, circumambulation of Kaaba, Hajj and sacrifices at Makkah. Isaac has no where been reported having participated with his father in such virtuous deeds.

(vii) Ishmael was the only participant in the final and most crucial trial of his life as per detailed in the following:-

وَإِذَا ابْتَلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلَّمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ
وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَعْلَمُ 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: [Al-Baqara] 2:124)

In continuation of the above, we find verses 124 to 129 which exclude Isaac from the trial and clearly suggest Ishmael as the victim of sacrifice. Similarly, the house of the Lord and all other blessings pertain to Kaaba at Makkah. Hence, Ishmael was the only son of Abraham who, due to his dedication, served at the house of the Lord at Makkah throughout his life.

(viii) God praised Abraham with the superlative degree as صادقا نبيا (a truthful man, a prophet) while Ishmael has also been referred to as رسول نبيا and also with the title of صادق الوعد (truthful in his promise). Similar to this quality of صادق الوعد we find that God also certified Abraham و ابراهيم الذى وفى i.e. 'and Abraham who fulfilled his engagements'. Thus, both the father and the son share the exalted position of **Rasul, Nabi** besides the quality of truth, and fulfillment of their promise and the engagements.

Survival of Abrahamic Traditions at Makkah

The world is faced with the loud cry of Israel that they are the only descendants of Abraham. They also pose to be the genuine inheritors of the legacy of Abraham. History and the ground facts do not uphold their claim. Actually, soon after the death of Joseph in Egypt, they remained in a miserable condition till the Lord delivered them from the yoke of the Egyptians through Moses and Aaron. During the period of their slavery, the Israelites had forgotten almost all the preaching and traditions of Abraham. **There was nothing to bind them together except their ethnicity and slavery under the Egyptians.** Even after the Exodus, there was no reliable resource available to them to reconstruct the life and faith of Abraham in its pristine purity. No doubt, the revelations of Moses contained the Ten Commandments and other rules, regulations and rituals of worship for Israel, yet there is hardly any evidence that he made Abraham the foundation stone of his religious faith or depicted him as a role model to be emulated by Israel.

We already discussed under the title 'History of the Bible' that the Genesis seems to be a writing of post-exilic period. There is hardly any scholar of eminence to maintain that it was composed either by Moses himself or it pertains to his period. Most probably, the writers of the Old Testament made good use of the legends and the folklore which the

Israelites had collected from other descendants of Abraham and Lot, living in the vicinity of Israel. They also seem to have benefited from the Arab traders visiting Canaan every now and then. This was, perhaps, the main source to restore the missing link between Abraham and the Israelites of the later times.

One also notes that many traditions pertaining to Noah and the genealogies, recorded in the Genesis, also have their origin in the verbal as well as written traditions of Babylonia which the Israelites picked up during their exile and remolded the same to suit the requirements of Israel. The Biblical record, as such, contains hardly any reliable information about the teachings, the traditions, and the way of life of Abraham to become a beacon of light for mankind to follow. **Perhaps, the only conspicuous survivor of the Abrahamic traditions in Israel was the tradition of circumcision, upheld by Israelites as the ritual, sealing the covenant of circumcision.** All else about Abraham went into oblivion; firstly during the period of slavery, secondly, during the period of oppression and turmoil leading to the exile and Diaspora of the Israelites. We observe from the history that the Israelites lived under oppression of the Egyptians and they had a period of turmoil while living among the Canaanites. They had been constantly in state of war with the Edomites, the Jebusites, the Philistines, the Midianites and other pagan nations from about 1400 B.C. to 200 B.C. Due to the long social and political interaction between them, the cults and practices of the said nations had gradual fusion in Israel. Perhaps, the period of Babylonian exile i.e. 587-538 B.C. had the greatest impact of foreign culture on the Israelites. While living as slaves among the Babylonians, they had minimal chances to practice or to revive their ancient traditions and faith. As such, scholars and sages among them had to make strenuous efforts to rehearse the law and to keep alive the traditions of the Israelites so that they might not lose their identity among the foreigners. The Israelites were also made to realize their lapses and transgressions which

had caused destruction of the nation. The priests, the sages and the scholars, therefore, continued to refresh awareness of law and an urge for restoration of the glorious past of the Israelites.

It is also conceivable that during their slavery at Babylonia, the Israelites learnt new things from their masters. We can, therefore, trace out the impact of certain legends and traditions of the Babylonians on the Israelites. The genealogies, the deluge of Noah and the story of Daniel etc. are the examples of the adaptation and incorporation of such literature of the Babylonians which became part of the Genesis to be taken as revelation from the Lord. The Old Testament was entirely rewritten after the return of the Israelites from the exile. Since the Torah and other books were burnt and destroyed at different times before and during the exile of the Israelites, therefore, no reliable manuscript of the Old Testament was traceable after the exile to reconstitute the Book. **It is said that in the absence of any genuine record, Ezra wrote the entire Bible from his memory.** Whatever be the reality in the said tradition, most of the modern scholars maintain that the Old Testament, as we find it today, took its formal shape during the post-exilic period i.e. between 535 to 200 BC. The book composed, as stated above, had already lost most of its original contents giving way to other writings suited to the specific requirements and aspirations of the Israelites of the post-exilic periods.

As compared with the above, the position of the Ishmaelites and Arabs living in the Arabian Peninsula has been entirely different from that of the Israelites'. The Arabs lived in the desert a life secluded from other nations around them. Except for the trading caravans of the Arabs visiting Yemen on the one side and Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Egypt on the other, they had hardly come into contact with other nations in the region. They, therefore, enjoyed immunity from other cults and creeds prevalent among their neighbors. Over exceptionally long periods, Arabs had the same way of life and they stuck to their culture and traditions. No one ever conquered them nor they were ever

driven out of their homeland. Kaaba, built by Abraham at Makkah, remained the religious center of all the people in Arabia, and the descendants of Ishmael kept the traditions of Abraham alive there. The beliefs, religious doctrines, cultural values, and the moral standards of the Arabs always reflected their origin in the teachings and the way of life of Abraham. They continued to worship Allah as the one and the only Lord God of the world for about 2200 years after Abraham. It was around 200 A.D. that Amr bin Luhayy moved to Makkah from Mesopotamia, captured the city, and in due course, took some idols from Syria and introduced idolatry there. By about 400 A.D., most of the people around Makkah had started worshiping the idols. The same position existed upto the advent of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ when there were about 360 idols – including the icons of Abraham and Ishmael – placed in the Kaaba. In spite of all this, **Allah continued to be acknowledged as the supreme God of the Arabs** while the idols represented various demi-gods or tribal deities with certain specific spheres of influence and powers assigned to each of them. Although much distortion had taken place in the faith and traditions of Abraham, yet a lot had survived from the same. Anyhow, even during the worst periods of idolatry, there had been some sane and sagacious persons like Tamim bin Auas, Jarud bin Amr, Zaid bin Sanah, Abdullah bin Salam and Adas who were monotheists.

Perhaps, most important among them was Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail who rejected both Judaism and Christianity and stuck to the monotheist faith of Abraham. He hated the idolatry and denounced the practice of the Quraish to offer sacrifices before the idols. Zaid always despised the vicious practices of the Quraish. He believed that God was one and used to say that God of Abraham was his God and faith of Abraham was his Faith. Hence, when asked about him, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said that on the day of judgment, Zaid would be raised as an independent community (or a nation). This shows that the Holy Prophet (PBUH)

considered him to be on the Faith of Abraham. For further details, please refer to page 99-105 Muhammad ur Rasool ullah by Al Sheikh Muhammad Raza, Jamiah Fawad Cairo - Urdu- Taj Company Ltd, Lahore.

Asma bint-e-Abu Bakr says that she saw Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail reclining against the wall of Kaaba and uttering that "O the group of Quraish, I swear by Him who controls my life that no one except me has survived on the faith and traditions of Abraham. Alas! If I knew the best way to worship the Lord, I would have adopted the same. Alas! I do not know the same. Saying this, he prostrated before the Lord. (ibid page 104). Some other names include Hashim bin Abd Munaf, Abdulmutlib, Abdullah bin Abdulmutlib. These people called themselves '*Hanifiyyah*' which meant 'turning away from idolatory'. They desired to be upright persons like Abraham who was not one of the polytheists. Such persons had no source of having a complete and correct knowledge of the teachings and traditions of Abraham, yet they always refrained from joining their people in the worship of the idols. Many among them had a strong urge to know about the pure faith of Abraham.

It is noted, however, that during all the intervening period from Abraham to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, annual congregation of the people from all parts of Arabia for Hajj, and the sacrifice continued at Makkah. Sa'yee i.e. running between Safa and Marwa Mountains, and different sorts of rituals of worship and prayer continued during all the times there. The Arabs kept many of the traditions of Abraham alive till the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who finally restored and revived the rituals and traditions of Abraham in the purified form. It is pertinent to note that the Arabs were always conscious of the fact that they were performing all those rituals to follow the traditions of Abraham. Over a long period of time since Abraham, the Arabs continued to perform the said traditions at the places where Abraham had initiated the same. Abraham, as such, has always been the central figure as the leader of faith for the Arabs. Subsequently,

the Muslims adopted almost everything from the Faith of Abraham. In the next chapter, we shall discuss the said ceremonies and rituals of Abraham revived and restored by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) at Makkah in the pattern of Abraham.

LEGACY OF ABRAHAM

There is no disagreement about the fact that Abraham was the primary person being tested and tried by the Lord by his commandment to sacrifice his only son. Similarly, there is no doubt that the sacrifice of the only son was a legacy of Abraham for his followers in faith including his posterity. People of the book i.e. the Israelites, the Christians and the Muslims acknowledge Abraham as their primogenitor in faith. Anyhow, the people of the book differ from each other as regards the tenets of faith of Abraham or observing his traditions including imitating his acts and deeds as legacy of Abraham and basis of their cult. We, therefore, observe that in spite of being sole claimants of descent and inheritance of all the blessings from Abraham, the Israelites have only a nominal reference to Abraham while they ignore him entirely as regards teachings of faith and self-less devotion to the Lord. Except for the ritual of circumcision, they seem to have inherited nothing from the traditions of Abraham. We, therefore, find no precepts of faith or instances of piety and righteousness assigned to Abraham to be imitated by his followers/descendants. As regards the narrative of Abraham in the Genesis, it attributes various vices to him which depict him as a liar, deceiver, greedy and coward person bent upon amassing wealth through shameful and unfair means. Such a person, therefore, is no good as a role-model for his followers. As regards the covenant, we shall quote a few verses from the

Genesis to show the impact of Abraham on the conduct of the Israelites.

For a summery of faith of Abraham, his religious traditions and the covenant of God with him, we quote verses from the Genesis as under:-

1. 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: **2. 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**: **3.** 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 12:1-3)

It has been further recorded that:-

7. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said: "**Unto thy seed will I give this land**: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. **8.** And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he **builded an altar unto the LORD**, and called upon the name of the LORD. (Gen 12:7-8)

Similarly, it has been said about Abraham that:

3b He reached the place between Bethel and Ai where he had camped before **4.** and had built an altar. There he worshiped the LORD. (Gen 13:3b-4)

In addition to the above, we find the covenant of the Lord with Abraham as under:-

18. Then and there the LORD made a covenant with Abram. He said, "**I promise to give your descendants all this land from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River**, **19.** including the lands of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, **20.** the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, **21.** the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Gergashites, and the Jebusites." (Gen 15:18-21)

God also said to Abraham:-

'I am the Almighty God. Obey me and do what is right' (17:1b)

7. "I will keep my promise to you and to your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant. I will be your God and the God of your descendants. **8. I will give to you and to your descendants this land in which you are now a foreigner. The whole land of Canaan will belong to your descendants forever**, and I will be their God." **9.** God said to Abraham, "You also must agree to keep the covenant with me,

both you and your descendants in future generations. **10. You and your descendants must all agree to circumcise every male among you.**" (Gen 17:7-10)

We observe from the above that although God said to Abraham '*I am the Almighty God. Obey me and do what is right*' yet the **God did not disclose his name to him**. As such, the Israelites did not know the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Though Abraham built altars at three different places and worshiped the God yet neither the Genesis nor the Israelites could identify any specific place where the Altar was built by Abraham nor do we find any description of the way of worship of Abraham there. It is said that major parts of Genesis were composed during the post-exilic period. In absence of any written records or revelation from the Lord, the Israelites had to depend on oral transmission of the traditions received by one generation from the other. Gaps were most probably filled with concocting fictions or adopting certain parts of Saga of the Old. The vague idea of the life, the person, the faith and the religious traditions of Abraham is, therefore, the product of the factors referred to above. Hence, the main cause for the erroneous description of the conduct of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob can be attributed to lack of any reliable records about the life, the work and the conduct of the patriarchs. The same we find in the narrative about the covenant of God with Abraham.

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Normally a covenant entails rites and duties for the parties participating in the covenant. From the narrative of the Genesis, however, it transpires that the covenant of God with Abraham consisted of two essential parts:

That the Lord God would make Abraham a blessing besides making his name great. Abraham would be the ancestor of many nations and his descendants would hold the entire land of Canaan as their possession forever.

That the descendants of Abraham must circumcise every male among them.

As such, the covenant was more binding on God than Abraham and his descendants. God had taken on him to give many descendants to Abraham to possess the entire land of Canaan forever. God also promised to make the name of Abraham great and a blessing for all the nations (Gen 12:2-3). God also said "*I will shield you from danger and give you a great reward*". As against the above, Abraham was obliged to obey the almighty God '*and to do what is right*' (17:1b).

We must observe here that although Abraham has been directed to do what is right yet no criteria have been provided to him to differentiate the right from the wrong. Aside from the said general reference to do good, the rite of Circumcision was the only other obligation which was a must for the descendants and the followers of Abraham as chief sacrament of Abraham to be observed by them. The Israelites, therefore, did not inherit any traditions of faith or law from Abraham except the general advice to do good and to circumcise each male member among them. Subsequently, teachings and Law of Moses was the only basis for the faith and conduct in life for the Israelites without any reference to its heritage from Abraham.

Abraham was, therefore, important for the Israelites only because the Lord had made him a blessing for the nations besides promising him numerous descendants to hold the entire land of Canaan forever. To claim entire inheritance from Abraham, therefore, the Israelites started denying legitimacy of the genuine descendants of Abraham and pretended to be the only descendants of Abraham excluding others to have any share with them. Factually, they asserted that their father was greater than the father of other nations around them. As regards faith and law, they depended entirely on Moses and did not acknowledge Abraham either a law giver or a founder of faith. The Israelites, therefore, referred to Abraham in a trifling manner and instead of showing him as a role model of righteousness, they even attributed various

vices to him (Gen 12:10-20, 20:1-18, 21:1-16) which, factually, reflect the post-exilic characteristics of the Israelites ascribed retrospectively to Abraham. Hence, according to the narrative of the Genesis, we find no outstanding piety, righteousness, or self-less devotion in Abraham to serve as role-model for the Israelites.

The Christians, too, accept Abraham as father of faith of the People of the Book. They, however, assign little importance to Abraham as founder of their faith.

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As against the Jews and the Christians, the Muslims acknowledge Abraham as founder of their faith. He was a great prophet of the Lord whom the Lord had declared امام اللہ i.e. leader of the mankind to serve as a role-model for all his descendants/followers. Islam is a revival of the basic faith of Abraham. Hence, all the primary traditions and tenets of Islam can be traced back to Abraham.

Muslims believe that prophet Muhammad was the last and the final prophet of the Lord to whom Almighty Allah revealed His perfect and ever-lasting covenant for the mankind in the shape of Qur'an being the superb and immutable word of God. Besides the covenant, Allah made Prophet Muhammad an excellent example for mankind. He was assigned the responsibility to provide guidance to entire mankind for all times to come. It was in him that the Lord God perfected his religion and blessings for the mankind. God, therefore, directed the Holy Prophet to proclaim as under:-

"Say: O people! surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth there is no god but He; He brings to life and causes to die therefore believe in Allah and His messenger, the Ummi Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may walk in the right way". (al-Qur'an 7:158)

Prophet Muhammad was, therefore, the only prophet of the Lord who was certified **having bestowed with the perfect religion and blessings of the Lord**. It was on the day of Hajjat-ul-Wada in the 10th Hijrah that revealed to him that:-

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful".(al-Qur'an 5:3)

ABRAHAM WAS NEITHER A JEW NOR A CHRISTIAN

"Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and **bowed his will to Allah's** (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah". (3:67)

"Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend. (4:125)

ABRAHAM WAS A MUSLIM & A FOLLOWER OF NOAH

In spite of erroneous claims of the Israelites, it is an established fact that the major faction among the descendants of Abraham had always been the Ishmaelites. Arabs had, therefore, been the main followers of the faith of Abraham for a very long time. Ishmael the first born of Abraham had been separated from the family to serve as the house of the Lord at Makkah. Due to the early death of his mother, Ishmael had to marry at an early age and he seems to have begotten his twelve sons in due course. Since Isaac was born 14 years after Ishmael and he got Jacob and Esau at the age of 60 years, therefore, it is plausible to assume that even the youngest son of Ishmael might have been much older than Jacob and Esau. Most of the sons of Ishmael might have multiplied into tribes by the

time Jacob married the daughters of Laban at the age of 84 years. This alludes to the fact that there had been undisturbed continuity of the faith and traditions of Abraham at Makkah and its surroundings for about 500 years even prior to the time, Moses and Aaron started their mission to deliver the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt and to guide them towards the faith in the Lord aside from guiding them towards the Land of Canaan.

As against the periods of turmoil, trouble, wandering, emigration and slavery of the Israelites extending over about 500 years the descendants and followers of Abraham had been enjoying undisturbed and peaceful settlements around Makkah. They knew exactly the places of worship and the site of the sacrifice made by Abraham. Even their oral traditions were much well preserved as compared to those transmitted by the unsettled and disturbed ancestors of the Israelites. To crown all other sources of transmission regarding teachings, traditions, acts and deeds of Abraham, the Lord made revelations to the Holy Prophet which stand as an immutable word of God in the Qur'an. Followers of Prophet Muhammad are, therefore, are the only people who have most reliable, accurate and definite source to revive the faith and traditions of Abraham. Abraham, therefore, remains the founder of faith and a role-model to be imitated by the Muslims for all times to come.

Verily among those who followed his Way was Abraham. (Al-Qur'an 37:83)

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." (2:131-32)

FAITH & PREACHINGS OF ABRAHAM

74. "Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: "Takest thou idols for gods? For I see thee and thy people in manifest error." **75** So

also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude **76**. When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: "This is my Lord." But when it set, He said: "I love not those that set. **77**. When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, He said: "unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray. **78**. When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)." But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah. **79**. "For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah." (6:74-79)

69. And recite to them the story of Ibrahim. **70.** When he said to his father and his people: What do you worship? **71.** They said: We worship idols, so we shall be their votaries. **72.** He said: Do they hear you when you call? **73.** Or do they profit you or cause you harm? **74.** They said: Nay, we found our fathers doing so. **75.** He said: Have you then considered what you have been worshipping: **76**. You and your ancient sires. (Al-Qur'an 26:69-76)

Abraham also said to his father:-

"O my father! Serve not Satan: for Satan is a rebel against (Allah) Most Gracious. 19/44

51. We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct, and well were We acquainted with him. **52.** Behold! he said to his father and his people, "What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?" **53.** They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them." **54** He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your fathers." **55.** They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?" **56.** He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing): and I am a witness to this(Truth). (21:51-56)

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)." (2:136)

Abraham had declared emphatically that:-

"And I will turn away from you (all) and from those whom ye invoke besides Allah: I will call on my Lord: perhaps, by my prayer to my Lord, I shall be not un blest." (Al-Qur'an 19:48)

26 Behold! Abraham said to his father and his people: "I do indeed clear myself of what ye worship: **27** "(I worship) only Him Who made me, and He will certainly guide me." **28** And he left it as a Word to endure among those who came after him, that they may turn back (to Allah). (Al-Qur'an 43:26-28)

83. Verily among those who followed his Way was Abraham. **84.** Behold! he approached his Lord with a sound heart. **85.** Behold! he said to his father and to his people, "What is that which ye worship? **86.** "Is it a falsehood- gods other than Allah- that ye desire? **87.** "Then what is your idea about the Lord of the worlds?" (37:83-87)

41. And mention Ibrahim in the Book; surely he was a truthful man, a prophet. **42.** When he said to his father; O my father! why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least: **43.** O my father! truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me, I will guide you on a right path: **44.** O my father! serve not the Shaitan, surely the Shaitan is disobedient to the Beneficent Allah: **45** O my father! surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent Allah should afflict you so that you should be a friend of the Shaitan. **46.** He said: Do you dislike my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will certainly revile you, and leave me for a time. **47.** He said: Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me: **48.** And I will withdraw from you and what you call on besides Allah, and I will call upon my Lord; may be I shall not remain unblessed in calling upon my Lord. (19:41-48)

FAITH ABOUT RESURRECTION & RETRIBUTION

Although the Israelites know nothing about the life after death yet The Lord has revealed in the Qur'an that Abraham had full faith in resurrection and retribution on the day of the judgment. It has been recorded that while expressing his enmity against the idols, Abraham said:

77. Surely they are enemies to me, but not (so) the Lord of the worlds; **78.** Who created me, then He has shown me the way: **79.** And He Who gives me to eat and gives me to drink: **80.** And when I am sick, then He restores me to health **81. And He Who will cause me to die, then give me life;** **82. And Who, I hope, will forgive me my mistakes on the day of judgment.**

(26:77-82)

Abraham also said to his people:-

"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.**" (29:25)

The Lord also said that:-

"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.**" (2:130)

"And We gave him Good in this world, and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the Righteous". (16:122)

The Qur'an also tells us that Abraham attained certitude about the life after death as detailed hereunder:-

"When Abraham said: "Show me, Lord, how You will raise the dead," He replied: "Have you no faith?" He said "Yes, but just to reassure my heart." Allah said, "Take four birds, draw them to you, and cut their bodies to pieces. Scatter them over the mountain-tops, then call them back. They will come swiftly to you. Know that Allah is Mighty, Wise."(2:260)

16. And (We also saved) Abraham: behold, he said to his people," Serve Allah and fear Him: that will be best for you- If ye understand! **17.** "For ye do worship idols besides Allah, and ye invent falsehood. The things that ye worship besides Allah have no power to give you sustenance: then seek ye sustenance from Allah, serve Him, and be grateful to Him: to Him will be your return.." (29:16-17)

PROPHET MUHAMMAD AS A FOLLOWER OF ABRAHAM

Although the Muslims believe in the teachings of all the true prophets of the Lord yet they were advised to follow the way of Abraham as commanded by the Lord. Prophet Muhammad, therefore, did not invent or introduce a new religion in his name because the Lord God had told him to proclaim that:-

"There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: "**We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah**: we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever,- unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone": But not when Abraham said to his father: "I will pray for forgiveness for thee, though I have no power (to get) aught on thy behalf from Allah." (They prayed): "**Our Lord! in Thee do we trust, and to Thee do we turn in repentance: to Thee is (our) Final Goal.**" (Al-Qur'an 60:4)

There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: "We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah: we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever,- **unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone.....**" (Al-Qur'an 60:4)

The Lord, therefore, emphasized as under:-

"There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow,- for those whose hope is in Allah and in the Last Day. But if any turn away, truly Allah is Free of all Wants, Worthy of all Praise". (Al-Qur'an 60:6)

It was further said that:-

Say: Allah has spoken the truth, therefore follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists. (Al-Qur'an 3:95)

"He showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way".(Al-Qur'an 16:121)

"So We have taught thee the inspired (Message), "Follow the ways of Abraham the True in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah." (Al-Qur'an 16:123)

"Who can be better in religion than one **who submits his whole self to Allah**, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.(Al-Qur'an 4:125)

"Say: "Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight,- a religion of right,- the path (trod) by Abraham the true in Faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah." (Al-Qur'an 6:161)

ABRAHAM WAS EXTREMELY TRUTHFUL

(Also mention in the Book (the story of) Abraham: He was a man of Truth, a prophet. (Al-Qur'an 19:41).

Incidentally, we must note here that the verse of the Qur'an quoted above refutes the baseless allegation of falsehood, deception, shamelessness and greed against Abraham as per the narrative of Genesis 12:10-20 & 20:1-13.

ABRAHAM TURNED AWAY FROM THE POLYTHEISTS AND THE WRONG-DOERS

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." (Al-Qur'an 2:135)

The Qur'an has asserted repeatedly that "Abraham was not among the polytheists". (2:135, 3:67 & 95, 6:161, 16:123.

According to the Qur'an, Abraham declared that:-

"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah." (Al-Qur'an 6:79)

The Lord God certified about him that:-

"Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and)true in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah" (Al-Qur'an 16:120)

ABRAHAM WAS THANKFUL TO GOD

He showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way. (Al-Qur'an 16:121)

ZAKAT, PRAYERS AND DOING GOOD

The Lord God revealed to the Muslims about the virtuous conduct of Abraham and Lot and said:-

72. "And We bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional gift, (a grandson), Jacob, and We made righteous men of every one (of them). **73** And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practise regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)". (Al-Qur'an 21:72-73)

Muslims, therefore, inherit the traditions of doing good, to establish regular prayers and to practise charity following in the steps of Abraham and Lot.

1. Rituals of Worship at Kaaba

The Muslims believe that Kaaba was built originally by the Angels and subsequently by Adam. After him, prophet Sheth Again reconstructed the walls of Kaaba which stood destroyed during the deluge of Noah. Kaaba had, therefore, been the ancient and the first house of the Lord on earth. On inspiration from the Lord, Abraham and Ishmael raised its walls again as detailed in the following verses from the Qur'an:-

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)..... **127.** 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 2:125,127)

**وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِنْزَارِهِمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ**

2.127 "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, 2:127 (Al-Baqara)

MOST OF THE PRAYERS OF ABRAHAM PERTAIN TO MAKKAH

The Qur'an records many prayers of Abraham which cover mostly his descendants and followers at Makkah and its surrounding.

35 Remember Abraham said: "O my Lord! make this city one of peace and security: and preserve me and my sons from worshipping idols. **36.** "O my Lord! they have indeed led astray many among mankind; He then who follows my (ways) is of me, and he that disobeys me,- but Thou art indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. **37.** "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy Sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that 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. **38.** "O our Lord! truly Thou dost know what we conceal and what were veal: for nothing whatever is hidden from Allah, whether on earth or in heaven. **39.** "Praise be to Allah, Who hath granted unto me in old age Isma'il and Isaac: for truly my Lord is He, the Hearer of Prayer! **40.** 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. **41.** "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 14:35-41)

Again we find Abraham imploring the Lord for the people of Makkah in the following words:-

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)!..... **128.** "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. **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."(2:126, 128-129)

Abraham and Ishmael had, therefore, been the participants in the singular privilege of reconstructing the ancient house of the Lord at Makkah as there existed no other sanctuary assigned to Allah anywhere on the Earth till then. It was at Makkah that the Lord covenanted with Abraham and Ishmael to sanctify the said house of Assembly of people who come to worship the lord there. As such, Kaaba had the unique privilege of declaration from the Lord as the covenanted house of Allah. No other sanctuary, such as the altar built on the side of River Jordan (Josh 22:10), Schechem (Josh 24:25), Abinedab's home at Balekh housing the tabernacle, Dan, Bethel, Shiloh, Mount Gerizem or even the temple built by Solomon at Jerusalem has ever been covenanted by the Lord as the house of prayer for mankind. We know that the Israelites had been stubborn people and they rebelled against the Lord again and again. They asked Moses to show them the Lord in His physical form and continued to insist on presence of the Lord among them and to lead them in the wars against their enemies. It was, perhaps, due to the excessive sense of possessiveness of the Israelites and also to provide them a central sanctuary for worship of the Lord that King David and Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem, which was destroyed in 587 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia. After return from the exile, the Israelites rebuilt it during 438-416 B.C. It was again rebuilt by King Herod who died in 6 B.C. while certain parts of the temple had not been completed till then. Ultimately, the temple was destroyed finally by the Romans in 70 A.D. bringing an end to the central sanctuary as well as the state of Israel.

As compared to the temple of Jerusalem, Kaaba had been the only house of the Lord on earth since the time of Adam and eve. God, therefore, directed Abraham to raise its walls and to keep it clean and tidy for the worshippers as detailed in the verse that follows:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَقَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمَّا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامٍ إِلَّا هِيمَ مُصَلَّى

وَعَهْدَنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهَرَا بَيْتَنَا لِلظَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَابِدِينَ وَالرُّجُّعِ
السُّجُودِ

"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)." Al-Qur'an, 2.125 (Al-Baqara)

The aforesaid verses clearly enumerate the traditions of praying at Kaaba, including drinking from Zamzam, maintaining Kaaba as a sanctuary and a place of peace, respite and assembly for the mankind to perform the rituals of compassing around Kaaba, and to run seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa to follow the traditions of Hagar, Abraham, and Ishmael there. Even prior to Islam, the Arabs continued to prostrate in prayer and to circumambulate Kaaba in their own typical manner. Even though certain perversions had taken place in the original rites introduced by Abraham, yet the Arabs had been performing the same to commemorate and imitate the traditions of Abraham. As such, Kaaba enjoyed the status of the central sanctuary, the symbol of unity, and a place of assembly for the people living in the Arabian Peninsula even before Islam. Subsequently, with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it became the focus of the worship of Lord, where millions and millions of Muslims from all parts of the world visit to commemorate the faith and traditions of the Holy Prophet Abraham. Since it was Abraham to restore the status of Kaaba as central sanctuary for mankind, therefore, it was mandatory for the People of the Book to venerate the same as the house of God rebuilt by Abraham.

2. Hajj

The Qur'an tells us that:

25. Surely (as for) those who disbelieve, and hinder (men) from Allah's way and from **the Sacred Mosque which We have made equally for all men**, (for) the dweller therein and (for) the visitor, and whoever shall incline therein to wrong unjustly,

We will make him taste of a painful chastisement. **26.** And when We assigned to Ibrahim the place of the House, saying: Do not associate with Me aught, and purify My House for those who make the circuit and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves. (Al-Qur'an 22:25-26)

The Lord commanded Abraham as under:

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجَّ يَأْتُوكُ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فُجْعٍ عَيْبِقٍ

27. And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path, (Al-Qur'an 22:27)

The word اذن incidentally contains the commandment of the Lord to call the mankind for Hajj to the house of the Lord. The same root is the basis of 'Azaan' (i.e. the call or summons to daily public prayers), and the Muslims assemble at Kaaba or other mosques throughout the world to offer their prayers five times a day in response to the aforesaid call. The tradition of Abraham about the Azaan and Hajj has always been kept alive since the period of Abraham and Ishmael, whereas we find no such tradition in the Jews or the Christians.

In continuation with the above, we find:-

28. That they may witness advantages for them and mention the name of Allah during stated days over what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds, then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy. (Al-Qur'an 22:28)

Further instructions for Hajj continue as under:

29. Then let them accomplish their needful acts of shaving and cleansing, and let them fulfil their vows and let them go round the Ancient House. **30.** That (shall be so); and whoever respects the sacred ordinances of Allah, it is better for him with his Lord; and the cattle are made lawful for you, except that which is recited to you, therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words, **31.** Being upright for Allah, not associating aught with Him and whoever associates (others) with Allah, it is as though he had fallen from on high, then the birds snatch him away or the wind carries him off to a far-distant place. **32.** That (shall be so); and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts. **33.** you have advantages in them till a fixed time, then their place of

sacrifice is the Ancient House. **34.** And to every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they may mention the name of Allah on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds; so your god is One God, therefore to Him should you submit, and give good news to the humble, **35.** (To) those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and those who are patient under that which afflicts them, and those who keep up prayer, and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them. (Al-Qur'an 22:29-35)

36. And (as for) the camels, We have made them of the signs of the religion of Allah for you; for you therein is much good; therefore mention the name of Allah on them as they stand in a row, then when they fall down eat of them and feed the poor man who is contented and the beggar; thus have We made them subservient to you, that you may be grateful.

37. There does not reach Allah their flesh nor their blood, but to Him is acceptable the guarding (against evil) on your part; thus has He made them subservient to you, that you may magnify Allah because He has guided you aright; and give good news to those who do good (to others). (Al-Qur'an 22:36-37)

3. Fasting Feeding the Poor

We observed that the Lord had directed Abraham to proclaim Hajj of his sanctified house. It was in the same connection that the Lord gave further instructions:-

And complete the Hajj or 'Umra in the service of Allah. But if ye are prevented (From completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice. And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (Necessitating shaving), (He should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice; and when ye are in peaceful conditions(again), if any one wishes to continue the 'Umra on to the hajj, He must make an offering, such as he can afford, but if he cannot afford it, He should fast three days during the hajj and seven days on his return, Making ten days in all. This is for those whose household is not in (the precincts of) the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah, and know that Allah Is strict in punishment. (Al-Qur'an 2:196)

The instructions continue as under:-

197. For Hajj are the months well known. If any one undertakes that duty therein, Let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good ye do, (be sure) Allah

knoweth it. And take a provision (With you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, o ye that are wise. **198.** It is no crime in you if ye seek of the bounty of your Lord(during pilgrimage). Then when ye pour down from (Mount) Arafat, celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Monument, and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before this, ye went astray. **199.** Then pass on at a quick pace from the place whence it is usual for the multitude so to do, and ask for Allah's forgiveness. For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. **200.** So when ye have accomplished your holy rites, celebrate the praises of Allah, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers,- yea, with far more Heart and soul. There are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us(Thy bounties) in this world!" but they will have no portion in the Hereafter. **201.** And there are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire!" **202.** To these will be allotted what they have earned; and Allah is quick in account. **203.** Celebrate the praises of Allah during the Appointed Days. But if any one hastens to leave in two days, there is no blame on him, and if anyone stays on, there is no blame on him, if his aim is to do right. Then fear Allah, and know that ye will surely be gathered unto Him. (Al-Qur'an 2:197-203)

4. The Sacrifice & Rami

The sacrifice was the tradition set by Abraham who had already dedicated his first born Ishmael and separated him along with his mother from the family since his suckling period to stand before the house of the Lord at Makkah. It seems that Ishmael and his mother mostly stayed around Kaaba during maximum time of the day and night but they venerated the house of the Lord in such a manner that they used to move outside Haram limits for their physical requirements such as bathing, washing, sleeping, eating or to get rid of any thing unclean. Since *Mina* was the nearest place outside Haram i.e. about 3 Kilometers from Kaaba, therefore, they perhaps stayed there with their animals or anything else owned by them. Most probably, Abraham inquired about the willingness of Ishmael about the sacrifice when he was at *Mina* (Al-Qur'an 37:102). It appears that after willing consent of the son, Abraham took him Along to go to *Marwa* near Kaaba to sacrifice him there before the house of the Lord. As such, they might have

started from Mina towards Kaaba. Soon Satan appeared to them to beguile them to prevent the sacrifice. Abraham, therefore, took up certain pebbles and threw the same towards Satan who disappeared immediately. The place is known as *Jamarat-ul-Ula* and the pilgrims during the Hajj stone a pillar there representing Satan. They do so in commemoration of the act of Abraham. It is said that about a furlong from the said place, the Satan again appeared to them for a similar trial once again. He was again stoned there and disappeared soon thereafter. This place is remembered as *Jamarat-ul-Wusta* i.e. the central figure representing Satan. Subsequently, Abraham and Ishmael reached the place known as *Jamarat-ul-Ukhra* i.e. the last figure representing Satan. There again Satan was stoned by Abraham and being utterly disappointed, he disappeared for the last time. Soon after Abraham and Ishmael entered the limits of Haram and went to Mount Marwa to fulfill the commandment of the Lord. All this shows that they had started from Mina towards Kaaba and mount Marwa and not the other way round. We have already quoted a saying of the prophet that Marwa had been the original place of Sacrifice and all the valleys and streets of Makkah enjoyed the same privilege. It was much after Abraham that number of sacrifice increased to such an extant that due to bad smell and other unclean parts of animals lying here and there around mount Marwa that the people decided to sacrifice their animals at Mina instead of Marwa.

The Almighty Allah accepted the said sacrifice but ransomed Ishmael by providing a lamb instead of Ishmael. The same tradition of Abraham has always been kept alive throughout Arabia from the time of Abraham till the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is pertinent to note that Muslims call the name of Allah while sacrificing or slaughtering their animals during Hajj or for their day to day use throughout the world. Before slathering the animal, they say:- بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم (in the name of Allah, the Great). Even prior to that the Muslims usually repeat the prayer of Abraham in the following words:-

إِنِّي وَجَهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَيْفَا وَمَا آتَاهُنَّ مِنْ أُمْرٍ كَيْفَ

"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah."¹⁰

All the flocks of Kedar and the camels of Midian and animals from the entire Peninsula have been driven towards Kaaba for sacrifice there. People of Kedar never sacrificed their animals at Jerusalem nor they worshipped the Lord in the temple at Zion. They always continued to go for pilgrimage to Kaaba at Makkah. Baca was another name of Makkah as affirmed by the Qur'an.

Valley of Baca has been described as 'Valley of the Balsam Tree'. This un-located site had the reputation of being a waterless place. The said description suggests wilderness like Makkah than Jerusalem. (The New Bible Dictionary Inter Varsity Fellowship Baca- page 128. Actually Baca is the name of Makkah. The Lord God said,"

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ الَّذِي يُبَكِّهُ مُبَارَّكًا وَمُدَّى لِلْعَالَمِينَ

The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka: full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings:¹¹

The place was also known as Macorabba.

Verse 6 of Psalm 83 records 'as they passed through the valley of Baca. It becomes a place of springs'. This shows that Baca during those days was not a proper settlement but a resort in the desert for the travellers. Zion, therefore, does not match with the said description. It, however, seems that due to their eagerness to assert their supremacy the Israelites tried to obliterate the name of Kaaba by inserting Zion in place of Kaaba or Bakkah as we find in verse ps 84 -5b, 7. For ready reference, we quote the relevant verses as under:-

¹⁰ Al-Qur'an 6:79 Yusuf Ali.

¹¹ Al-Qur'an 3:96 Yusuf Ali.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! **2.** My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God..... **4.** Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. **5.** Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. **6.** Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. **7.** They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. (Psa 84:1,2,4-7)

We know that the house of the Lord did not exist at Zion during the reign of King David. It was towards the beginning of second half of King Solomon's reign that the temple was completed and dedicated to the Lord. There was no house of the Lord at Zion prior to that. This shows that insertion of Zion at two places in psa 84 is a clear-cut distortion in the text.

Our particular interest is the verses quoted below:

11 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!

It appears that Medina during the time of the Prophets was called the city of Selah due to Jabal-e-Selah at its centre i.e. about one kilometer from Masjid-e-Nabvi at Medina. The Battle of Ahzab was fought at Madina on or around this mountain in Shawal 5 AH. Hassaan bin Thabet, the famous Muslim poet of Arabia had described the death of Amr bin Abd-wood in the battle of Ahzab in the following words:

Similarly Kaab bin Maalik, wrote the following in his elegy:

Quote from:

P-140, Rehmat ul Ilel Aleemeen by Qazi Muhammad Suleman

It will be interesting to note that almost the entire chapter 42 of Isaiah alludes to the Promised Prophet. Among other attributes the Lord calls his servant, 'the one, I have chosen' which is also an epithet of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Muhammad means 'praiseworthy' or highly praised one' who was also called Muhammad Mustafa. Mustafa was another name of the Prophet and it means 'the chosen one'. Similarly, all other description in the said chapter

apply better to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) than anyone else. It has been recorded that:

10 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! Isa: 42:10

It is worth noting here that Isaiah suggested to sing a new song to all the people of the world to praise the Lord. The distant lands, the desert and its towns, people of Kedar and those who lived in the city of Sela i.e. Medina had to praise the Lord and shout for joy from the tops of the mountains. The prophecy was fulfilled when after his flight from Makkah, the Holy Prophet had taken refuge at Madina where the people welcomed him while the girls were chanting the song of welcome as under:-

طلع البدر علينا من ثنيات الوداع

وجب الشكر علينا ما دعا الله داع

The people of Kedar, being the desert people, therefore, praised Prophet Muhammad and the Lord God of Muhammad (PBUH). They never visited Jerusalem nor they sang songs of praise for the God of Israel.

The next verse says 'let those who live in the city of Sela shout for the joy for the tops of the mountains'.

The said battle was a turning point in the history of Islam because the defeat of the non-believers there brought an end to their invasions against Muslims.

SACRIFICE OF ISHMAEL; A LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

God has referred to the sacrifice of Abraham in the following words:

وَنَذَرْنَا لَهُ بِنِجْعَانَ عَظِيمٍۖ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرَةِ

"And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times:" (Al-Qur'an, 37.107-108)

The verses, quoted above, leave no doubt that **God not only accepted the sacrifice of Ishmael at Makkah graciously but he also left it as a legacy for the future generations.** We, therefore, find that the Arabs always sacrificed the animals on the fixed date i.e. 10th of Dulhijja at Makkah, and subsequently, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made it compulsory for all the Muslims of the world to sacrifice their animals at their local places annually on the said date facing themselves and their animals towards Kaaba. Needless to repeat that all sacrifices during the time of Moses at the tabernacle were made facing towards the Kaaba. The said tradition of facing towards the house of the Lord (Kaaba) was also followed by the prophets of Israel right from Moses to Jesus. **The holy of holies was kept on the southern side of the tabernacle in the desert and Moses or the priests after him stood on the Northern side of the tent to offer their sacrifices on the altar facing towards the south** (Ex 40:22-25, Lev 1:11, 4:24 & 6:25). **Facing to the south had no other importance except that they were essentially facing towards the only house of the Lord at Makkah which was in the south from there. Although the Israelites never sacrificed a single goat in commemoration of the sacrifice made by Abraham,** yet the tradition of facing towards the south while offering the sacrifices at the temple was maintained throughout the ages till the final destruction of the temple in 70 AD. All this proves that the sacrifice was made at Makkah where it has always survived as an unbroken tradition of Abraham and Ishmael ever since the sacrifice made by them. The commemoration of the sacrifice by Abraham has been a tradition of utmost importance to the Muslims and the 10th of Dulhijja is the greatest day of festivity for the Muslims throughout the world. The annual festival is commonly named as *Eid-ul-Adha*.

As regards the Israelites, they cannot tolerate that any honour, grace or sanctification may go to their rivals. For the said reason, they claim that it was Isaac and not Ishmael who had the unique honour to be sacrificed before the Lord. They never considered Abraham as the central pillar of their Faith nor they found any necessity to imitate him. Hence, in spite of claiming that Abraham had sacrificed Isaac, the Israelites never adopted the said tradition of Abraham and Isaac throughout their history. They feel fully contented just by asserting that it was Isaac who was sacrificed before the Lord. As such, mere confession of Israel that Abraham had sacrificed Isaac gives no credit to them. Their abandoning the same from their lives proves their diversion from the ways of Abraham which makes them accountable before the Lord. The Israelites, therefore, earn the wrath of God for not following the traditions of Abraham.

Since there has been no trace of any such commemoration of the sacrifice in the Israelites, therefore, it proves conclusively that the tradition did not belong to Israel nor was the sacrifice made in the areas occupied subsequently by Israel.

4. Allah; the Only Lord God of the Universe

It was Abraham who introduced the worship of one and the only Lord of the universe; and made a declaration as under:

إِنِّي وَجَهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَبِيبًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah." Al-Qur'an, 006.079 (Al-Anaam)

Abraham effectively declared that he was free from the worship of the idols, and also that the idols were **enemies to him**. He was the first person in the history of the world to smash the idols at Ur. Following the said tradition, his

great grand son, Muhammad (PBUH) purified Kaaba by smashing 360 idols worshipped by the pagans there. Since then, Kaaba stands purified from idolatry for all times to come.

5. The Traditions Of Hospitality

In the Genesis 18, the Bible tells us that Abraham extended extensive hospitality to three guests visiting his tent. The Arabian traditions tell us that Abraham was always helpful to the poor and usually did not eat unless there were some guests to dine with him. The Arabs inherited the said traditions from him to such an extent that there had been no other nation in the world to match with them in extending the unmatched hospitality to the guests and the way-farers. During the hajj season, the Quraish and other tribes at Makkah looked after the pilgrims and treated them as the guests of the Lord. **The Israelites, on the other hand, did not inherit any moral virtues from Abraham** and they never had been hospitable to the strangers. **It was Abraham who declared Kaaba as the house of Allah**, and even the pagan Arabs always believed in Allah as the ultimate Sovereign Lord of the universe. Allah had the universal acceptance as Lord God in Arabia and many people were named Abdullah even before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

6. The Circumcision

as detailed in the following:-

9. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. **10.** This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. **11.** And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. **12.** And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. **13.** He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **14.** And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not

circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant. (Gen 17:9-14)

We, therefore, observe that the Israelites were obliged only to acknowledge the Lord as their God, to obey him and do what is right. In addition to the above, they had no other obligation except to circumcise each and every male among them. As such, it was a mandate for them that they must circumcise their children in any case. Circumcision was, therefore, the primary obligation of the Israelites and they always continued to perform the same. Later on, it became a bone of contention among the early converts to Christianity because the Hellenized people like St. Paul and his followers took exception to that. While many Christians in the East continued to circumcise their children even up to three or four hundred years after the crucifixion of Jesus but ultimately the theology of St. Paul prevailed over the teachings of Jesus and all the prophets of Israel before him. The Christians in the Hellenized region, however, abandoned the ritual of sacrifice from their community for good.

The obligation of circumcision was not, however, so strict for the Muslims as it had been for the Israelites. Hence, there is no mention of the same in the Qur'an as a must for the Muslims. Since Muslims are followers of Abraham, therefore, they observe circumcision along with other traditions of Abraham such as *Tawaf-e-Kaaba*, *Saeed*, *Sacrifice*, drinking the water of *Zamzam* and *Rami of Jamraat*. Anyhow, of utmost importance for the Muslims is the faith of Abraham as shown in the following verses of the Qur'an:-

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)." (2:136)

the Prophet of Islam advised the Muslims to circumcise their children which is a revival of the tradition of Abraham. It, however, remains

As compared to the circumcision, the Muslims attach top most importance to

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "Five practices are characteristics of the Fitra: circumcision, shaving the pubic region, clipping the nails and cutting the moustaches short" (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 72, Number 777)

- a) Prayers
- b) Zamzam
- c) Muqam-e-Ibrahim
- d) The Circumambulation between Safa and Marwah

The Hajj

- a) Origin from the Qur'an
- b) Talbiah
- c) The Rituals of Hajj
- d) The Sacrifice
- e) Rami

This shows that Abraham had received guidance from Allah at the very early age and soon he had to oppose his father, his family, and other people regarding worship of the idols. In spite of his continued efforts to stop the worship of idols, he smashed the idols, as discussed earlier and was, therefore, summoned for the trial before the king. Abraham advocated his case strongly, but in spite of failure in the arguments, the king kept him imprisoned for about 7 years. Subsequently, the king prepared a huge furnace of fire and

threw Abraham there. God, however, saved Abraham miraculously, but the said miracle put no effect on the non-believers. Having vain hopes of any improvement in his people, Abraham had to move out of Ur to find some other land fertile enough to receive the divine message. Only Lot, his cousin or nephew and Sarai, his wife, believed in him, accompanied him wherever he planned to go. Abraham was childless at the age of 75 and Sarah was barren although she had touched 65 years of age.

THE MUSLIM FAITH AND CULTURE

The Muslims believe that God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, All-seeing, All-knowing, All-hearing, and the Eternal. Nothing can be kept hidden from the Lord as He knows even deep rooted ideas or intentions; even before they take any form in mind and heart of man. With the transcendent attributes, as above, the Lord needs no helpers, no intermediaries, no intercessors, no reconciliators between Him and the man or His other creatures. He can neither be kept ignorant nor deceived. God Himself attends to supplications of all His creatures, and He and He alone provides for them. Having a clear concept about the attributes of the Lord, one can claim to be a Muslim only if he surrenders himself completely to the will of God. All the wishes, priorities, preferences, attachments, or interests in life must be subservient to the will of God. To a Muslim, all his relations, ethnicity, locality, language, possessions, or wishes are of secondary importance; while the primary importance remains the unconditional submission to the commandments of the Lord.

Even the Bible affirms that God promised to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the sea-shore. Through the descendants of Abraham, the Lord God had promised to bless all the nations of the world.

Due to their prejudices and self-interest, the Israelites have themselves tried to restrict the all inclusive promise of the Lord only and exclusively to Israel. This, in fact, is the clear-cut denial of the word of God, distortion of His message, and breach of the trust, which the Lord had reposed in them. The ethnicity and self-interest of Israel prevailed so much over the Israeli thought that they had been arrogant to the prophets and also rebellious against the Lord wherever there was anything unpalatable to them.

Blessings of God to the nations, other than Israel, were never acceptable to the Israel. They hardly acknowledge the descendants of Abraham from his seven sons other than Isaac as the progeny of Abraham. No prophet outside Israel was acceptable to them, and in the later periods, the Israeli prophets like John, the Baptists and Jesus, the Christ did not receive proper recognition of Israel simply because they preached against the prevailing traditions, wishes, and vested interests of Israeli high-ups and even the commoners. The aforesaid attitude prevented Israel from accepting sanctified sacrifice of Ishmael, and also the finality of Prophet-hood in the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The present discourse, therefore, does not aim at convincing Israel as no one can convince someone who intentionally refutes the truth. Only those who are the lovers of truth and seek truth for the sake of truth can fairly evaluate the reason and the facts being presented herein below for a better judgment in the matter.

No need to put stress on it that the Muslims believe in all the prophets of the Lord and hold in high esteem the Books revealed to them. Although, over a period of time, much of the contents of the said Books were either forgotten or lost and also distorted by numerous editions, omissions, and deletions, yet being unaware of such incidents, the Muslims rely on them. The Muslim scholars, like Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Jareer, maintained that 'while writing about any particular nation, one should rely, primarily, on the writings of the people of the same nation'. Many such writers accepted Israeli traditions even to elaborate or expose the verses of the Quran being unaware that many of those writings were

either unauthentic or distorted by the scribes. Ibn Jareer was, perhaps, the only prominent scholar who specially recorded most of such Israeli writings to explain certain verses of the Quran without due care and caution necessary to affirm veracity thereof. He was, perhaps, the first person to opine mistakenly and unconsciously that Abraham sacrificed Isaac, and not Ishmael. Although he has tried to substantiate his writings by interpreting the relevant verses of the Quran, but has failed to give convincing reasons to support his opinion. On the other hand, it transpires that he had relied more on the Bible which contains the name of Isaac being the victim of sacrifice, and believing the Old Testament as the Book of God, he started to arrange support from certain verses of the Quran.

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