

CHEVRAH TORAH...LT, 5780

Discovering the Other—Understanding Ourselves

Through the human exchange, difference becomes a blessing...We must learn the art of conversation, from which truth emerges not, as in Socratic dialogues, by the refutation of falsehood, but from the process of letting our world be enlarged by the presence of others who interpret reality in ways radically different from our own...We will make peace only when we learn that God loves difference and so, at last, must we.

[The Dignity of Difference, Rabbi J. Sacks, pgs. 22-23]

VaYera Genesis 22:1-19

Key KOSHI:

WHO was offered up as a sacrifice by Abraham?

HOW do the Akedah's variant faith-framings help us better understand its impact/meaning for us as Jews in relation to those who are not?

P'SHAT...The Story that Unearths THE Question: WHAT Are We to Become

Torah

Akedah – Genesis 22:1 – 19

After these events, God tested Abraham. "Abraham!" He said. "Yes?", "**Take your son, your only one, whom you love – Isaac, and go away to the Moriah area.**

Bring him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will designate to you". Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey. He took his two men with him, along with his son **Isaac**. He cut wood for the offering, and set out, heading for the place that God had designated. On the third day, Abraham looked up, and saw the place from afar. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go to that place. We will worship and then return to you". Abraham took the offering wood and placed it on [the shoulders of] his son **Isaac**. He himself took the fire and the slaughter knife, and the two of them went together. **Isaac** spoke up to Abraham. "Father", "Yes, my son?", "Here is the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for the offering?", "God will see to a lamb for an offering, my son" replied Abraham. The two of them continued together. When they finally came to the place designated by God, Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood. He then bound his son **Isaac**, and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. Abraham reached out and took the slaughter knife to slit his son's throat. God's angel called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham! Abraham!", "Yes?", "Do not harm the boy. Do

Quran

Dhabih – Suwar 37:99-113

And [then] he said, "Indeed, I will go to [where I am ordered by] my Lord; He will guide me. My Lord, grant me [a child] from among the righteous". So We gave him good tidings of **a forbearing boy**. And when he reached with him [the age of] exertion, he said, "O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so what do you think?" He said, "O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast". And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead, We called to him, "O Abraham, You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, thus do we reward the doers of good. Indeed, this was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice, And We left for him [favorable mention] among later generations: "Peace upon Abraham". Indeed, thus do we reward the doers of good. Indeed, he was of Our believing servants. And We gave him good tidings of **Isaac**, a prophet from among the righteous. And We blessed him and **Isaac**. But among their descendants is the doer of good and the clearly unjust to himself.

not do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God. You have not withheld your only son from Him". Abraham then looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. He went and got the ram, sacrificing it as an all-burned offering in his son's place. Abraham named the place "God will See" (Adonai Yireh). Today, it is therefore said, "On God's Mountain, He will be seen". God's angel called to Abraham from heaven a second time, and said, "God declares, 'I have sworn by My own Essence, that because you performed this act, and did not hold back your only son, I will bless you greatly, and increase your offspring like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring shall inherit their enemies' gate. All the nations of the world shall be blessed through your descendants – all because you obeyed My voice. And Abraham returned to his young men, and they departed together for Be'ersheva.'"

1 וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר
הֲנִנִי : 2 וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אַהֲבִיתָ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמִּרְיָה
וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לַעֲלֹה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ : 3 וַיִּשְׁכֹּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ
אֶת־חַמְרוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נְעָרָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֶת יִצְחָק בְּנֵו וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֲלָה וַיִּקַּח וַיִּלְךְ אֶל־
הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים : 4 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־
הַמָּקוֹם מֵרְחוֹק : 5 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נְעָרָיו שְׁבוּ־לְכֶם פֹּה עִם־הַחֲמוֹר וְאֲנִי וְהַנֶּזֶר נִלְכָּה
עַד־כָּה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִשְׁוֹבָה אֲלֵיכֶם : 6 וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵצֵי הָעֲלֹה וַיִּשֶׂם עַל־יִצְחָק בְּנֵו
וַיִּקַּח בֵּידוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלֶת וַיִּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו : 7 וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו
וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאִיֵּה הִשָּׂה לַעֲלֹה : 8 וַיֹּאמֶר
אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֵה־לוֹ הִשָּׂה לַעֲלֹה בְנִי וַיִּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו : 9 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
אָמַר לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיָּבִן שֵׁם אַבְרָהָם אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת־הָעֵצִים וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנֵו
וַיִּשֶׂם אֹתוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לַעֲצִים : 10 וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִדְּו וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלֶת
לִשְׁחַט אֶת־בְּנֵו : 11 וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִלֶּאֲדָ יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם | אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר
הֲנִנִי : 12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנֶּזֶר וְאֶל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי | עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יִרְא
אֱלֹהִים אֶתְּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי : 13 וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא
וְהִנֵּה־אֵיל אַחֵר נֶאֱחָז בִּסְבָךְ בְּקִרְנָיו וַיִּלְךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לַעֲלֹה תַּחַת
בְּנֵו : 14 וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה | יִרְאֵה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֶר הַיּוֹם בְּהַר יְהוָה
יִרְאֵה : 15 וַיִּקְרָא מִלֶּאֲדָ יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שְׁנֵית מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם : 16 וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נָא־
יְהוָה כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִחִידְךָ : 17 כִּי־בִרְךָ
אַבְרָכָךָ וְהִרְבִּיה אַרְבֵּה אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּם וַיִּרְשׂ זַרְעֲךָ
אֶת שְׁעַר אֵיבָיו : 18 וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּזַרְעֲךָ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקִלִּי : 19 וַיָּשָׁב
אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נְעָרָיו וַיִּקְמוּ וַיִּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל־בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבֵאֵר שֶׁבַע

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ...An Interchange of Truths: The More Jewish—The More Human

V.1-2 *Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Hineni." And He said, "Take your son, your only one, whom you love—Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him up there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will show you."*

ABARBANEL... This incident is so central to the welfare of Israel that we recount it in our prayers every day... Its basic purpose was to redeem us from the sin of Adam...From this time forward, the descendants of Isaac would no longer be ruled by their physical desires, but by intellect alone. We were all part of this sacrifice.

KIMCHI... The truth is that the purpose of this trial was to demonstrate to the world Abraham's love for God...We know that Abraham loved Isaac more than he did himself...If Abraham was willing to carry out this command without hesitation, what a testament of faith...to a transcendent love for God.

RASHI... *"Take your son"*—but I have two sons... *"Your only one"*—but each is only of his mother... *"the one you love"*—but I love both my sons...Finally, the Holy One said: *"Isaac!"*

IMAM MUFTI...[IslamReligion.com, June 2019]...It had been close to ten years since Abraham had left his wife and baby in Mecca in the care of God. After a two-month journey, he was surprised to find Mecca a lot different than how he had left it. The joy of reunion was soon interrupted by a vision which was to be the ultimate test of his faith. God commanded Abraham through a dream to sacrifice his son, the son he had had after years of prayers and had just met after a decade of separation. We know from the Quran that the child to be sacrificed was Ishmael, as God, when giving the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, also gave the glad tidings of a grandson, Jacob (Israel):...Because God promised to give Sarah a child from Abraham and grandchildren from that child, it is neither logically nor practically possible for God to command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, since God neither breaks his promise, nor is He the "author of confusion." Although Isaac's name is explicitly mentioned in Genesis 22:2, we learn from other Biblical contexts that it is clear interpolation, and the one to be slaughtered was Ishmael. *"Thine Only Son"*...God commands Abraham to sacrifice his only son. As all scholars of Islam, Judaism and Christianity agree, Ishmael was born before Isaac. From this, it would not be fit to call Isaac the only son of Abraham...Indeed, it was the greatest test of all, the sacrificing of his only child, one born to him after he had reached an old age and years of longing for progeny. Here, Abraham showed his willingness to sacrifice all his belongings for God, and for this reason, he was designated a leader of all humanity, one whom God blessed with a progeny of Prophets. It is this epitome of submission and trust in God which hundreds of millions of Muslims reenact every year during the days of Hajj, a day called *Yawm-un-Nahr* – The Day of Sacrifice,

IBN EZRA... Some say *"offer him up"* really means *"bring him up the mountain,"* and that would be sufficient to consider him as an offering...But somehow Abraham did not understand the hidden meaning and hastened to slaughter him—at which point the Holy One told him, *"That's not what I meant!"* ...These geniuses had to come up with an explanation like this because they were certain the Holy One could not issue a command and then say, *"Don't do it!"* They have forgotten that originally it was the first-born who were selected for divine service, and then a year later were replaced by the Levites.

RASHI... *"V'Ha-aleyhu sham l'Olah"*—The Hebrew says nothing about a burnt offering...The Holy One did not want Abraham to slaughter his son, but merely to bring him up the mountain *"as an offering."* Once he brought him up the mountain, God told him to bring him back down.

KIMCHI... *"on one of the mountains I will show you."*—God had two good reasons why he told Abraham what to do in such an ambiguous way. First, to give Abraham additional credit for complying to a command wrapped in a riddle without ever questioning...And secondly to teach us that sometimes the intention behind an action is worth more to God than the act itself, so much so that the Binding of Isaac is understood in God's eyes as if the father had actually sacrificed his son!

V.3 *So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass, took two of the servant boys and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the Olah, and set out...*

SARNA...The patriarch makes no verbal response, not even *Hineni*. He who was so daringly eloquent on behalf of the people of Sodom surrenders in total silence to his own bitter personal destiny...He performs a series of preparatory acts all described with an economy of words appropriate to the somber silence that pervades the scene...

V.8 *And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His offering, my son." And the two of them walked together.*

ALTER... *"and the two of them went together."* The economy of this refrain-repeated clause is haunting: two people, father and son, together for what threatens to be the last time...together *"in common purpose"* [RASHI] a father to sacrifice his son.

V.9 *They arrived...and Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac, and placed him on the altar atop the wood.*

SARNA...The Hebrew *"AKAD"* is found nowhere else in the Bible...In postbiblical texts it is a technical term for the tying together of the forefoot and the hindfoot of an animal...

Prof J.DOUKHAN ... It is significant that in Jewish sources the word *AKEDAH* which technically refers to tying the Tamid—lamb, is first attested to Isaac in the late second century of the Tanaitic period. An early reference in MEKHILTA de'Rebbe Ishma'el on Exod 12:13 is made: *"And when I see the blood, I will pass over you..."* That is, when I see the blood of Isaac's sacrifice. The offering of Isaac is thus not only identified as the lamb, but also connected to Passover redemption...the expiatory sacrifice of the Passover understood to be a memorial of the sacrifice of Isaac.

DRASH...A Dialogue of Celebrating Difference: Listening for the Light

Prof J.DOUKHAN ... [from "The Aqedah at the Crossroads", Prof of Old Testament, Andrews University, 7th Day Adventist Theological Seminary]

...The parallel development of the Jewish & Christian traditions concerning the Aqedah suggests that these two exegetical traditions moved in close relationship to each other. Just as Christians responded to Jews, the Jewish texts give evidence of the Jewish reaction to Christian apologetic. In order to show that the Aqedah was at least as effective as the sacrifice of Jesus, the ancient rabbis arrogated the Aqedah details borrowed from the Passover story....A passage in Genesis Rabbah goes so far as to describe Isaac bearing his own cross, as a condemned man would do....

One thing is clear, namely, that the Aqedah controversy gives witness to a mutual interaction between Christianity and Judaism during the early Christian centuries...In many respects, it is a product of the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The Jewish-Muslim controversy revolves essentially the identity of the historical victim of the Aqedah. Already in the Quran the accent is on the son; he is not the passive figure he appears to be in the Bible. The Quranic tradition is closer to Jewish tradition than it is to the biblical story. The interest has shifted from Abraham to his son, who in Muslim tradition, was not Isaac, but Ishmael.

...In the Quran, the name of the son who was intended to be sacrificed is not mentioned. And in any case, Isaac is still held in high esteem...It seems that at an earlier stage of Muslim tradition, Isaac was the intended sacrifice; but as Ishmael began to assume importance, the view that Ishmael was the sacrifice prevailed...

The Muslim explanation indicates a polemic against the Jews, and it pertains to an ethnic rather than theological concern. According to Muslim apologetics, it was only ethnic preoccupation that led the Jews to change the original version from Ishmael to Isaac...This interpretation not only undermined the entire status of Judaism but was also used to show that Islam had superseded Judaism.

...A stylistic analysis of these two sacred texts, the Bible and the Quran, reveals the importance of dialogue...Like the Hebrew text, the Quranic version is terse, and consists essentially of dialogues, placing special emphasis on the exchange between father & son....

...The interest in the Aqedah occurs at the birth of the three Abrahamic religions, serving their purpose of justifying their respective claims to absolute truth...Conversations among the three religions was vital, because at this early stage of their history their very existence and survival were at stake. Thus, the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogues on the Aqedah were not only necessary because of the differences among them, but also were possible because of the connections...In fact, the Aqedah is in essence a dialogue; for that matter, it contains an eloquent appeal for dialogue...

Ironically, it appears that the basic texts themselves point in a completely different direction from that which is indicated in the controversies...For it is at the center of the dialogue...where the human question and silence of the victim cries out...

I believe that Martin Buber had the intuition of this lesson in his critique of Kierkegaard's treatment of the Aqedah. Whereas Kierkegaard saw in the Aqedah the principle of the "teleological suspension of the ethical," Buber found in the Aqedah the existential urge for the I-Thou encounter. It is highly significant that the only trait of the Aqedah which has survived throughout the controversies is the memory of the victim and his eternal question—the silence that reveals the deep human yearning for communication...a yearning that persists to the present day.

Rabbi SHLOMO RISKIN... [chancellor of Ohr Torah Stone and chief rabbi of Efrat, Israel]

Years ago, when I was telling my young children the story of the Akeda, “the sacrifice of Isaac” from this week’s Torah portion, my daughter, Batya, tearfully interrupted my tale saying, “Stop lying to me Abba and stop telling stupid and scary stories. Hashem loves everyone—that’s what you always tell us. He couldn’t have asked Abraham to do to Yitzchak (Isaac) what you said...”

Trembling, she then ran into the bedroom to complain to my wife...For the first time, I was forced to re-examine the biblical account from the viewpoint of a naïve, potential victim...How could God have made such a cruel request of Abraham?...The opening words, “*And it happened after these things (or events)*” suggests that the Divine commandment came as a result, or a punishment, for the preceding biblical events...

Abraham’s penultimate act prior to the Akeda may be called “The sacrifice of Ishmael.” It begins when the older and more sophisticated Ishmael mocks the younger and more naïve Isaac, leading Sarah to demand that Abraham banish Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham at first demurs, but then complies with a Divine command that he heed his wife Sarah.

Despite God’s command that listen to Sarah, the Ishmael narrative has striking parallels to the Akeda story, suggesting that God’s request that Abraham sacrifice Isaac comes as a punishment for the callous sacrifice of Ishmael one chapter before!

The Bible describes the banishment, or sacrifice, of Ishmael: “Early the next morning, Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba” [Genesis 21:14].

Rashi’s commentary on this verse, points out, “Abraham [sent them out with] bread and water and not with gold and silver.” This was nothing short of a death mission! And then we find the parallel phrases to the Akeda: “Abraham rose early in the morning” [Gen. 22:3], and “Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering (olah) and placed it on his son Isaac” [Gen. 22:6] just as he placed the meager supplies of bread and water on Ismael.

God sends Abraham with Isaac, his olah, on what seems to be a death mission and they, too, must wander towards an unknown destination [Gen. 22:3]. In both incidents, it is an angel who saves both boys [Gen. 21:17; 22:11] and the angel who blesses each with the blessing of becoming a great nation [Gen. 21:17; 22:15-19].

The command of *Akedat Yitzhak* comes as the punishment for *Akedat Yishmael!*

SOD...Courage & Vulnerability: The Open Questioning that Leads to Love Rabbi SHAI HELD...

After the Akedah, Isaac seems to disappear. At the opening of the story, as Abraham and Isaac journey toward the land of Moriah at God's command, the Torah takes special care to tell us that *"the two of them walked on together"* (Gen. 22:6). And yet after the intense drama of the *Akedah*, after the angel has stayed Abraham's hand, we hear only that "Abraham then returned to his servants" (22:19), with whom he travels home to Beer-sheba. The sensitive reader cannot help but ask: Where is Isaac?

The next time we meet Isaac, we are told that he "had just come back from the vicinity of Be'er-lahai-roi" (Gen. 24:62). Where is Be'er-lahai-roi, and more important, *what* is it? A few chapters earlier, when Hagar had been cast out by Abraham for the first time, an angel had discovered her and promised her vast offspring, including a child who could fend for himself and could not be easily victimized or enslaved (16:11-12). She names God "El-Roi," the God of seeing, and the place where God has seen her "Be'er-lahai-roi." Hagar discovers—or better, is discovered by—a God who regards the unregarded, who remembers those whom others have forgotten.

By telling us that Isaac has gone to Be'er-lahai-roi, the text subtly tells us something extremely important. Where does Isaac go in the aftermath of the Akedah? To the place where Hagar met God. Sure enough a midrash observes that when we encounter Isaac coming from Be'er-lahai-roi, he has just come back from a mission: "He had gone to bring Hagar home, the one who sat by the well and said to the Life of the World. 'See (re'eh) my humiliation'" (Genesis Rabbah 60:14). In the Rabbinic imagination, in other words, after Sarah's death, Isaac arranges for his father to marry Hagar.

But why did Isaac go to Be'er-lahai-roi? Why does he want and need to find Hagar?

Perhaps Isaac, newly traumatized, goes to find comfort in his father's other wife, undoubtedly bearing some deep traumas of her own. Isaac also has newfound compassion for Hagar's predicament and seeks not only to be consoled but also to offer consolation. Having been made to suffer at Abraham's hands, he has a newfound capacity to embrace those who have endured a similar fate.

Isaac—confused, troubled, likely somewhat lost—heads for the one place he knows where a very different face of God has been revealed: Be'er-lahai-roi, the place where God sees and hears those who have been cast out. Isaac goes to Be'er-lahai-roi, then to rediscover a face of God that has been eclipsed for him—the God of mercy and compassion rather than stern judgment (or sheer inscrutability).

Isaac has just experienced the terror of an utterly mysterious God, and now, to preserve both his faith and his sanity, he goes in search of the tenderness of an utterly loving One....Perhaps Isaac can remind us, too, of the possibility of being met by the God who saw Hagar, by the God of compassion who never forgets us, no matter how downtrodden and cast off we may sometimes feel.

October 27, 2012

Makaveli 1992 says:

ONLY ONE SON WAS OFFERED FOR SACRIFIC...Was he ISHMAEL – the Eldest Son of Abraham or ISAAC the Second Son – born 14 years later!!! God decided to test the faith of Abraham, He said;

And He said, Take now thy son, thine only {son} _____, 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

There happens to be an unresolved, longer than a millennium old debate, as to who accompanied Prophet Abraham and submitted himself to the will of God – the first born – Ishmael – the progenitor of the prophet Muhammad, or the second born – Isaac – the progenitor of Jesus Christ? The Bible writers had placed the name of Isaac in the blank space above. Muslims believe Ishmael was the one that was taken by Abraham for the ‘Supreme Sacrifice’. Every year, Muslims throughout the world celebrate Id al-Adha as a day of festivity, recalling the courage and patience of Ishmael and the unwavering devotion of Abraham. There are judicious reasons to believe that this event happened in the life of prophet Abraham when Isaac was not yet born.

We will now examine what the Bible and the Qur’an have to say on this controversial subject. After the sacrificial offering the Bible records;

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. Gen. 22:12 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}, Gen. 22:16

The word “only” is very significant in the above quoted three verses. In the Hebrew text the word used is “yachiyd” (not “echad”), which identifies absolute singularity – the one and only. The logical argument put forward is: God must have used the phrase “thine only {son}” during the period of fourteen years when Isaac was not yet born and Ishmael the Only Son of Abraham was old enough to accompany his father for the Sacrificial Offering. The Jews and Christians argue: being born to Hagar, a hand-maid of Abraham’s wife, Ishmael was recognized as the Descendant or the Seed of Abraham, but not as his Son. The following verse from their own Bible NEGATES their argument and declares ISHMAEL born to Hagar was called “a son”.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son’s name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. Gen. 16:15

Christian scholars going to their second line of defense say: Ishmael, the Son of a bondwoman, was called Abraham’s Son at the time of his birth – but that was only for the time being. Ishmael lost the status of being the Son of Abraham the day Isaac was born to Abraham’s wife Sarah the freewoman. The Bible nowhere records losing of the acquired status. In fact, the biblical text quoted below, proves that in the sight of God the Creator, Ishmael was the Son of Abraham even after the death of his father Abraham.

And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him (Abraham) in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which {is} before Mamre. Gen. 25:9

The idea of a son losing his status probably comes from the cuneiform tablets exemplifying the law of the second and third millennium. The law states that a childless father could adopt a son to serve him in his old age. Should a son be born later to that man, the adopted son’s status as an heir would be altered. The answer to this Law of Adoption is: Ishmael was not adopted, he was fathered by Abraham. Hagar was the wife of Abraham records the Bible:

Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. Genesis 16: 3 The obvious question is, what are the reasons that in spite of these overwhelming evidences the name of Isaac appears in the blank space above? The descendants of Ishmael and Isaac (Arabs and Jews) have fought battles in the arenas of politics and religions since the day of a serious

domestic quarrel in the house of Abraham. This Domestic Dispute led Sarah driving away Hagar and her son Ishmael.

Tribal pride and deep rooted hatred for the enemy can make a person go to any lengths. In the history of mankind, false pride and jealousy have been the roots of many evils and untold sufferings. The Jewish scribes wrote the Book of Genesis. It is very probable that they would not have liked the idea that this singular honor of being offered for the Supreme Sacrifice go to the progenitor of their enemy – Ishmael – rather than their own patriarch – Isaac. The unyielding pride of Jewish priests made Jesus call them stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart.

It is related that a renowned traditionalist of Jewish origin from Qurayza tribe, and another Jewish scholar who converted to Islam, told Caliph Omar Ibn `Abd al-Azizi (717-20) that the Jews were well informed that Ismail (Ishmael) was the one who was bound (for sacrifice), but they conceal this out of jealousy.

THE QUR'ANIC NARRATION

A question is often asked: Does the name of Ishmael appear in the Qur'anic narration as the one that was offered for the Supreme Sacrifice? The answer is: No. The name of Ishmael does not appear in the text. However, the Qur'anic narration gives the sequence of events that happened before and after the sacrificial offering. These chronological events very precisely testify that Isaac was born after the event.

Abraham pleads for a Son: "O my Lord! grant me a righteous (son)!" So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then when (the son) reached (the age of) serious work with him he said: "O my son! I see in a 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 wilt find me if Allah so wills, one practicing Patience and Constancy!" So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and He had laid Him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice). Qur'an 37:100/103.

The good news for the birth of Isaac – a righteous prophet – comes much later. Hence, "they had both submitted" in the above verse refers to Abraham and his eldest Son Ishmael. The narration continues:

We called out to him "O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: and We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: "Peace and salutation to Abraham!" Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. Qur'an 37:104/110.

Muslims all over the world send "Peace and salutation" to prophet Abraham after their ritual prayers, five times a day. Continuing the history of Abraham, the Qur'an reveals:

For he was one of Our believing Servants. And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet, one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right and (some) that obviously do wrong to their own souls.

Qur'an 37:111/113.

The above verses clearly indicate that the incident of Supreme Sacrifice happened before the birth of Isaac and Ishmael was the "only Son" of Abraham, as mentioned in the Book of Genesis 22:2/12/16.