

The Story Of Ibrahim And His Personality

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This text provides an analysis of Ibrahim's (Abraham) story as presented in the Holy Qur'an. It examines his deep faith, unwavering devotion to God, and the significant trials he endured. The commentary highlights his status as a model for other prophets and reflects on his spiritual journey, including his pivotal moments of trust in God's commands.

It further explores how Ibrahim's experiences shaped Islamic teachings and the moral lessons drawn from his life. The text offers valuable insights into his character and his enduring influence in the Islamic tradition.

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The Story Of Ibrahim And His Personality From: Al-Mizan, An Exegesis Of The Qur'an, Vol. 13, Under Commentary of Surah Al-An'am, Verses 74 – 83 Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i Translated by: Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi

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The Story Of Ibrahim, Peace Be Upon Him, And

His Personality

From: **Al-Mizan, An Exegesis Of The Qur'an, Vol. 13, Under Commentary of Surah Al-An'am, Verses 74 – 83**

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Translated by: Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi

1. The Story Of Ibrahim ('A) In The Qur'an

From his childhood until the beginning of his discernible age, Ibrahim used to live in isolation from the society of his people. Then he came to them and joined his father, and found him and his people worshipping the idols. He was not pleased with what he saw since his nature was pure and blameless, blessed by Allah, the Glorified who showed him the truth and the kingdom of everything – in short, the true word and the good deed.

Therefore, Ibrahim ('a) started arguing with his father against worship of the idols and calling him to abandon them and to adopt monotheism of Allah, Glory be to Him and to follow Him so that He may guide him to the right path and remove him from the control of the Satan. He continued to argue against his father and to insist upon him [to abandon idol-worshipping] until the latter scolded him, pushed him away from himself and threatened to stone him if he does not stop criticizing his idols and disliking them.

Ibrahim ('a), however, was courteous towards his father out of kindness and compassion as he possessed noble character and pleasant speech so he bade him farewell and promised to ask forgiveness for him. Then he separated himself from him, his people and whatever they worshipped besides Allah¹.

Thereafter, he argued against the people in matter of idols² and argued against others who worshipped the sun, the moon and the star until he proved the truth to them and he came to be known as one who opposed the idols and gods³. [This continued without any incident] until one day, the people went for a collective worship out of the town and he pretended to be sick and so didn't go out with them and stayed back. Then he entered the temple of idols and planned to trick them by cutting their idols into pieces except the big one so that they may refer to it when they returned. When the people returned and saw what had happened to their idols, they investigated about the perpetrator. Some of them said that they had heard a young man known as Ibrahim talking ill of them. They summoned him to their gathering; then brought him to the public so that the people may be witness. They asked him: "Did you do this to our gods, O Ibrahim?" He replied: "Actually, this big one seems to have done it; ask them, if they can speak?" He had left the big one intact without breaking it into pieces and had placed an axe on its shoulder or something similar to it so that they may see that he is one who has broken the idols.

Ibrahim (‘a) had said that while he knew that they did not believe him since they knew that the idol is an inanimate item which cannot speak. He, however, said whatever he said so that he could say to them: 'Ask them, if they can speak,' in order to make them openly confess that the idols are inanimate objects that do not have life and consciousness. It is then that they turned to one another and said: “Surely you yourselves are the unjust;” and they reflected within themselves and said: “You surely know that they do not speak.” He said: “What! Do you worship, besides Allah, what neither harms you nor helps you? Fie on you and on what you worship besides Allah! What! Do you not then understand? Do you worship what you curve yourselves while Allah has created you and what you do?”

They said: “Burn him and help your gods.” So they built a pit and started a blaze of fire; all the people joined in this matter and threw him into the fire. Allah, however, made the fire cool and harmless for him, and defeated their plan⁴. It was during these events that he was presented to the king whom people worshipped and considered as a god. The king argued with Ibrahim (‘a) about his God. Ibrahim (‘a) said: “My Lord gives life and causes death.” The king challenged this argument by saying: “I also give life and cause death” by killing one prisoner and releasing another. So, Ibrahim (‘a) now argued more clearly so as to nullify his fallacy; he said:

“So surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the east, then make it rise from the west; thus, he who disbelieved was confounded” (2:258).

When Allah rescued him from the fire, Ibrahim (‘a) started calling the people towards the pure faith, the faith of monotheism. Just a few people believed in him. Among those few, Allah has named Luqman and Ibrahim's wife with whom he had migrated; he had married her before traveling from his place to the holy land⁵.

Then Ibrahim (‘a) and the believers who were with him repudiated from their people, and he personally repudiated from Azar whom used to call 'father' but who was not his real father. He then migrated along with his wife and Luqman to the holy land so that he may worship Allah, Glory be to Him, without any hindrance from the unjust and tyrannical group of his people⁶. It was there when Allah, Glory be to Him, gave him the good tidings of Isma‘il and Ishaq, and after Ishaq, Ya‘qub, while he had become elderly and reached the old age. Isma‘il was born to him, then Ishaq, and Allah, Glory be to Him, blessed him, his two son and their children.

Thereafter, upon the command of his Lord, Ibrahim (‘a) went to the land of Mecca that was without any vegetation, and settled his son Isma‘il who was an infant [and his mother] therein and then returned to the holy land. Isma‘il grew up in Mecca and later on a group from the Arab who lived close by settled around him and that was the beginning of the city of Mecca.

Ibrahim (‘a) used to occasionally visit Isma‘il in the land of Mecca before the city and the Ka‘bah was established, and even after that⁷. Then he built the Ka‘bah, the Sacred House, with the help of Isma‘il ^ﷺ that was the first house established for the people from Allah as a blessing and guidance for the world,

in it are clear signs such as the Maqam Ibrahim; and whoever enters it will be secure⁸. He called people for hajj and instituted the rituals of pilgrimage⁹.

Allah then ordered him to sacrifice his son Isma'il ('a). So, when his son was with him in the rituals, and when he reached the age of working with him, Ibrahim said to him:

“O my son! Surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see’. He said: ‘O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah pleases, you will surely find me of the patient ones” (37: 102).

“So when both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead” (37: 103).

“We called out to him saying: ‘O Ibrahim!’” (37: 104).

“You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus do We reward the doers of good” (37: 105)

The last that the Noble Qur'an relates of Ibrahim's stories are his prayers when he was in Mecca as quoted in the surah of "Ibrahim"¹⁰ which ended with his words:

“O our Lord, forgive me and my parents, and the believers on the day when the reckoning shall come to pass” (14:41).

2. The Status Of Ibrahim ('A) Before Allah, Glory Be To Him, And His State Of Worship

The Almighty Allah, in His Book, has bestowed upon Ibrahim ('a) the most beautiful of praises, thanked his struggle in His way the best of thanks, repeatedly mentioned him by name in more than seventy places in His Book¹¹, and enumerated many of His blessings upon him.

Here are some of those blessings: Allah granted him his rectitude before¹²; selected him in this world [among the chosen ones] and promised that he will be placed among the righteous ones in the Hereafter; this is when his Lord said to him,

“Submit! And he said: ‘I submit myself to the Lord of the universe” (2: 131).

He (s.w.t.) is the one who made him turn his face towards His Lord being upright, wholly to Him and was not to be among the polytheists¹³; He is the one granted tranquillity to his heart and gave him certainty by showing him Allah's Kingdom of the heavens and the earth¹⁴; Allah took him as His friend¹⁵; placed His mercy and blessings upon him and his family, and described him as one who was satisfied¹⁶; He praised him as forbearing, tender-hearted and oft- returning (to Allah)¹⁷; and He also described him as a nation which was sincerely obedient to Allah and he was not one of the polytheists, rather he was grateful for His blessings; He chose him and guided him to the right path, He gave him good in this life

and promised to place him among the righteous ones in the Hereafter¹⁸.

Allah also described him as a true prophet¹⁹; and counted him among His believing servants and among the good ones; and greeted him with peace²⁰; and that he is mentioned among those who were men of strength and insight²¹. Allah appointed him as a leader for the people²² and made him one of the five Major Prophets who were given the scripture and law²³; Allah gave him the knowledge, the wisdom, the Book, the kingdom, the gifts and gave perpetuity to his descendants²⁴; and He placed prophethood and revelation among his descendants²⁵, and blessed him with a truthful tongue among the people of the Hereafter²⁶.

These are the divine positions and spiritual statuses that Almighty Allah has bestowed to Ibrahim (‘a); and the Holy Qur’an has not described the qualities of any of the prophet and noble messengers, and their statuses, the way it has fully described his qualities and noble statuses. Refer to the interpretation of each of these positions that we have described in its appropriate place in what has already passed or what I shall, God willing, explain since getting into them at this place would take us away from the purpose of this section.

The Almighty Allah has preserved Ibrahim's noble life and religious personality by naming this upright religion as Islam just as Ibrahim had named it, and He has attributed it to him:

“...The faith of your father Ibrahim; he named you Muslims before...” (22:78).

And He (s.w.t.) said:

“Say: ‘Surely, (as for) me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path; (to) a most right religion, the faith of Ibrahim the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists’” (6: 161).

He also made the Ka‘bah, the Sacred House, that Ibrahim had built as the qiblah of the people, and instituted the hajj rituals – these are actually rituals that depict the story of him settling his son and his slave-girl [in Mecca] and of sacrificing his son Isma‘il and how he strived to move in the direction of the Lord and patiently bore challenges and difficulties for His sake as it was mentioned in the commentary of: ***“And (remember) when We made the House a rendezvous for men...” (2: 125)***, in Volume One of this book.

3. Ibrahim (‘A)'S Blessed Impact In Human Society

One of his overwhelming impacts is that the faith of monotheism, wherever and with whomsoever it exists, is traced back to him. The religions that are today described as monotheistic are: the Jewish faith which is traced to Prophet Musa son of ‘Imran (‘a) whose genealogy goes back to Isra‘il who is Ya‘qub son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim (‘a); the Christian faith which is traced to Prophet ‘Isa son of Maryam (‘a) who is a descendent of Ibrahim (‘a); and the Islamic faith whose founder is the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (S) whose genealogy goes back to Isma‘il son of Ibrahim (‘a). So, the belief of monotheism

is his noble legacy for the world.

Moreover, in Islam, one can also observe Ibrahim's teachings such as ritual prayer, charity, pilgrimage, permissibility of eating the meat of cattle, repudiation of Allah's enemies, the greeting [of peace], the ten rituals about physical cleanliness (five in the head and five in the rest of the body) ²⁷ those of the head are cutting of the moustache, lengthening the beard, combing the hair, brushing the teeth and using toothpick; those of the body are shaving the bodily hair, circumcision, clipping of the nails, washing the body after major impurity and purifying oneself by water²⁷.

A comprehensive search proves that whatever good traditions (in beliefs and deeds) in the human society exist are from the legacy of the noble prophethood as we indicated in the previous discussions. Ibrahim ('a) has a positive legacy on all humans of this era irrespective of the fact whether they realize it or not.

4. Ibrahim ('A)'S Story In The Present Torah

The Torah says: And Te'rah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Ha'ran. Now these are the generations of Te'rah. Te'rah begat Abram, Nahor, and Ha'ran; and Ha'ran begat Lot. And Ha'ran died before his father Te'rah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chal'dees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sa'rai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Mil'cah, the daughter of Ha'ran, the father of Mil'cah, and the father of Is'cah. But Sa'rai was barren; she had no child. And Te'rah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Ha'ran, his son's son, and Sa'rai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chal'dees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Ha'ran, and dwelt there. And the days of Te'rah were two hundred and five years; and Te'rah died in Ha'ran²⁸.

The Torah further says: Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So, Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Ha'ran. And Abram took Sa'rai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Ha'ran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Si'chem, unto the plain of Mo'reh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 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. And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el on the west, and Ha'i on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sa'rai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon. Therefore, it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but thee they will keep alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels.

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sa'rai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had²⁹.

Then the Torah says: And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Ha'i; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Per'izz-ite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.' And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Go-mor'rah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zo'ar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom³⁰.

It further says: And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomor'rah, and the king of Ad'mah, and the king of Zeboi'im, and the king of Be'la (the same is Zo'ar;) and they joined battle with them against them in the vale of Sid'dim; With Ched-or-la'o-mer the king of E'lam, and Ti'dal king of nations, and Am'ra-pheil king of Shi'nar, and A'ri-och king of E'la-sar; four kings with five. And the vale of Sid'dim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Go-mor'rah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Go-mor'rah, and all their

victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed³¹.

The Torah says: And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mam're the Amorite, brother of ʕash'col, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Ho'bah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people³².

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Ched-or-la'o-mer and the kings that were with him, at the vale of Sha'veh ʕ the same is the King's Vale. And Mel-chiz'e-dek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, 'Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.' And he gave him tithes of all.

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram: Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, ʕash'col, and Mam're, let them take their portion.³³

Until it says: And Sa'rai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Ha'gar. And Sa'rai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sa'rai. And Sa'rai Abram's wife took Ha'gar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

And he went in unto Ha'gar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sa'rai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sa'rai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sa'rai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Ha'gar, Sa'rai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sa'rai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.' And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child,

and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ish'mael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seest me? Wherefore the well was called Be'er-la-hai'-roi; behold, it is between Ka'desh and Be'red. And Ha'gar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Ha'gar bare, Ish'ma-el. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Ha'gar bare Ish'ma-el to Abram³⁴.

The Torah says: And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 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 God³⁵.

It further says: And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 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. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations...³⁶

The Torah says: And God said unto Abraham, As for Sa'rai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sa'rai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. 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 Ish'ma-el 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 for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ish'ma-el, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham³⁷.

Then it narrates the story of the Lord coming with two angels to destroy the inhabitants of Sodom, the people of Lu³⁸. They came to Ibrahim who hosted them and they ate from the food that he had prepared

from the calf that he had slaughtered and the curd and milk that he offered them. The angels gave the good news to Sarah of giving birth to Ishaq; and they also mentioned the matter of the people of Luṭ. Ibrahim tried to dissuade them from destroying them but they convinced him, and then the destruction took place.

The Torah then describes Ibrahim's move to Ge'rar and how he settled therein and told its king, Abim'e-lech, that Sarah was his sister. The king took Sarah for himself but God came to him in dream and told him not to take someone's wife. He called Ibrahim and rebuked him for calling his own wife as his sister. Ibrahim apologized and explained that he had done so out of fear of death. The king returned Sarah to him and gave him plentiful wealth. (Similar to the story of Fir'awn [of Egypt mentioned earlier].)

The Torah says: And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age. And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned³⁸.

And Sarah saw the son of Ha'gar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.³⁹

And Abraham arose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Ha'gar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Be'er-she'ba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Ha'gar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Ha'gar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad, and he grew; and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt⁴⁰.

The Torah continues: And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto

him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here am I. And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Issac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Mo-ri'ah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 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. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 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. 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. And Isaac spoke 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? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together^{[41](#)}.

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. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. 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. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the 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. And Abraham called the name of that place Je-ho'vah-ji'reh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time. 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: 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; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Be'er-she'ba; and Abraham dwelt at Be'er-she'ba^{[42](#)}.

Then the Torah describes Ishaq's marriage to a girl from his own tribe, and then death of Sarah at the age of 127 years in Hebron, and thereafter Ibrahim's marriage to Keturah who bore him sons; then it talks about the death of Ibrahim at the age of 175 years and his sons Ishaq and Isma'il buried him in the cave of Machpelah and that is in the present-day city al-Khalil (Hebron).

This is the summary of the stories of Ibrahim ('a) and his life history as seen in the Torah^{[43](#)}. It is necessary for a critical scholar to compare what has come in the Old Testament with Ibrahim's story in the Holy Qur'an, and then he can form his opinion.

5. Contradictions & Inconsistencies In Torah's Narration

The inconsistencies in the sentences of the story mentioned in the Torah and contradictions in its conclusions confirm what the Holy Qur'an says that the Bible has been subjected to interpolation.

A)

The major flaw in the story is that it has neglected to describe his early struggles and his arguments with his people, and the trials and tribulations that they inflicted upon him; and these are the shining aspects of his history.

Among its flaws of neglect is Ibrahim's task of building the Sacred Ka'bah, declaring it as a secure sanctuary, and instituting the pilgrimage. No religious scholar or a social critic would doubt that this ancient structure which continues to stand on its foundations since 4000 years is from the major Divine signs that reminds the people of Almighty Allah, it has preserved the truth for a long time, and it is the first house of Almighty Allah that was established for the people as a source of blessing and guidance for the world.

This neglect stems from nothing but the Israelite bias of the writers and authors of the Torah that pushed them to erase any mention of the Ka'bah and only to enumerate the altars of sacrifice that Ibrahim built in Shechem [present day Nablus], East Jerusalem, and the hill of the Lord.

[This is also reflected] in the way they have described the noble prophet, Isma'il: that he was a wild ass of a man against every man and every man's hand against him; and that he had no nobility rather he was banished by his father, and grew up becoming an archer!

“They desire to extinguish with their mouths the light of Allah; but Allah will perfect His Light” (Qur'an, 61:8).

B)

Among other flaws of the Torah is that it attributes actions to Ibrahim that do not fit the status of prophethood or the spirit of righteousness and magnanimity: for example, the statement that Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine to Ibrahim and blessed it; and he was the priest of God the Most High⁴⁴.

There is a great dispute about the time-frame of Hammurabi's reign, and most of what is said about him does not fit the era of Ibrahim's lifetime who lived 2000 BC. For example, in the book al-'Arab qabl al-Islam it said that Hammurabi reigned in Babylon in years 2232-2287 BC while in the Hammurabi Code, as quoted in Aqdam sharayi' l-'alam by F. Edward, it says that his reign was in years 2167-2205 BC; and yet the Qamus al-lami 'sh-sharq wa l-gharb says that he reigned in Babylon in the years 1686-1727 BC, and the Qamus al-Kitabi l-muqaddas says that he reigned in 1920-1975 BC.

The most obvious proof that denies the suggestion [that Melchizedek was Hammurabi] is the discovery of the rock in the ruins of Babylon that has the Hammurabi Code which contains names of the Babylonian idols ☞ this proves that Hammurabi was an idol-worshipper and he could not have been the priest of God the Most High. [Author's note].

C)

Among its inconsistencies is that Ibrahim (‘a), in one instance, told the princes of Pharaoh of Egypt that Sarah was his sister (and he advised her to support his statement by saying to her: “Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee.”) And, in another instance, he told Abimelech, the king of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister. So the Pharaoh took her as a wife once, and then Abimelech took her as a wife the second time. And in the first case, he explains away his statement as “his sister in faith” and in the other case as “his father's daughter from a woman other than his mother.”

The mildest conclusion of Ibrahim's statement (that does not fit the status of one who was God's friend) is that he was presenting his wife to the Pharaoh and Abimelech deceitfully so that they make take her as their wife while she is a married woman! He does this in order to acquire precious gifts and gain the wealth from them both!

All this in spite of the Torah's clear statement that Sarah, at that time and in particular when Abimelech took her, was an old woman of seventy years or more ☞ an age when normally a woman loses the grace of her youthfulness and the purity of her beauty. Moreover, the flamboyant kings and the tyrants are attracted only to young girls who are exceptionally beautiful and stunningly gorgeous.

D) Comparing Such Narrations In Hadith Literature

Similar stories can be seen in the narrations of Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (S) said:

Ibrahim did not tell a lie except on three occasions. Twice for the sake of Allah when he said: “I am sick,” and he said: “(I have not done this but) the big idol has done it.” The (third was) that while Ibrahim and Sarah were going (on a journey) they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant, “This man (i.e. Ibrahim) is accompanied by a very charming lady.” So, he sent for Ibrahim and asked him about Sarah saying: “Who is this lady?” Ibrahim said: “She is my sister.” Ibrahim went to Sarah and said: “O Sarah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and me. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, so don't contradict my statement.” The tyrant then called Sarah and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but (his hand got stiff and) he was confounded. He asked Sarah: “Pray to Allah for me, and I shall not harm you.” So Sarah asked Allah to cure him and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but (his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and) was more confounded. He again requested Sarah: “Pray

to Allah for me, and I will not harm you.” Sarah asked Allah again and he became alright. He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said: “You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil.” The tyrant then gave Hajar as a girl–servant to Sarah.

Sarah came back (to Ibrahim) while he was praying. Ibrahim, gesturing with his hand, asked: “What has happened?” She replied, “Allah has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and gave me Hajar for service.”

(Abu Hurayrah then addressed his listeners saying, “That [Hajar] was your mother, O Banu Ma’u’s–Sama’ [i.e. the Arabs, the descendants of Isma’il, Hajar’s son]).”

There is a hadith in Sahih al–Bukhari through multiple narrators from Anas and Abu Hurayrah, in Sahih Muslim from Abu Hurayrah and Hudhayfah, in Musnad of Ahmad from Anas, Ibn ‘Abbas, and it has also been produced by al–Hakim from Ibn Mas‘ud, by al–Tabarani from ‘Ubadah ibni ‘s–Samit and Ibn Abi Shaybah from Salman, by al–Tirmidhi from Abu Hurayrah, and by Abu ‘Awanah from Hudhayfah from Abu Bakr ؓ the hadith of intercession of the Holy Prophet (S) on the Day of Resurrection. It is a long narration which says that the people will approach the prophets, one after another, asking them for intercession with Allah; and whenever they would approach a prophet and ask him for intercession, he will send them to the next prophet and apologize because of his mistakes until they reach to the Last of the Prophet, Muhammad (S), who will positively respond to their plea. In that narration, it says that when they will approach Ibrahim (‘a) asking him to intercede on their behalf with Allah, he will say to them: “I am not fit for this because I have lied three times,” referring to his statements: “I am sick”, “the big idol has done this” and “tell him that I am your brother.”

Proper reflection does not support the contents of these two narrations, as mentioned by some researchers. If the narrations suggest that the three statements described as lies were not outright lies but kind of double–entendre and amazing expositions (as eluded in some words of the narration in some versions of the Prophet’s saying that, “Ibrahim did not utter a lie except three, all of them for the sake of Allah”; and his description that, “none of them are lie, rather they are for support for Allah’s religion”) – then why did Ibrahim, in the narration of the Day of Resurrection, count them as his sins and as barriers for intercession, and apologizes on that account? Moreover, with such an interpretation, the lies would be counted as his struggles for the sake of Allah and as his good deeds for the faith, if at all it were permissible for any prophet to lie for the sake of the faith. However, you know from the previous discussion on “Prophethood” in volume two⁴⁵ of this book that lying is absolutely not permissible for prophets (‘a) since it will totally erode the trust in their information [from the Divine revelation] and statements.

If such types of statement can be considered as a lie and a barrier from intercession with Almighty Allah, then Ibrahim’s statement when he saw the star, the moon and the sun, “this is my Lord, this is my Lord” is more deserving of being described as a lie that prevents intercession that stems from nearness to Almighty Allah.

Furthermore, Ibrahim ('a)'s statement quoted by the Almighty Allah:

“Then he looked at the stars, looking up once” (37:88).

“Then he said, “Surely I am sick” (37:89).

Is devoid of any context that shows that it was a lie and unreal; it is most probable that he was sick with a kind of illness that did not prevent him from smashing the idols.

Similarly, when the people asked him:

“Have you done this to our gods, O Ibrahim?” (21:62).

“He answered them (while they knew that the idols were inanimate items devoid of any sense or will), “Surely this their chief must have done it;” and then added the remarks, “therefore ask them, if they can speak” (21:63).

“This cannot be counted as a lie since it is a statement in circumstances of rebuke in order to lead the opponent to accept the error in his views. And so, the people had no way out but to confess by saying:

“Certainly you know that they do not speak” (21:65).

That is when Ibrahim said:

“What! Do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you?” (21:66).

“Fie on you and on what you serve besides Allah...?” (21:67).

If the narration intends to say that the three statements of Ibrahim ('a) were real lies, then that would constitute an obvious denial of the Book of Almighty Allah! We leave that to the understanding of a serious scholar by referring to the second section of this discussion on “Ibrahim's status with Allah and his state of worship” that Allah has praised him with the best of praises and appreciated him in the best way.

How can the mind of a serious scholar accept or apply the words of the Almighty: ***“And mention Ibrahim in the Book; surely he was a truthful (man), a prophet” (19:41)*** on a lying person who easily lies when he finds himself in difficulties? How can Allah shower those noble praises upon a person who does not care about Him in matters of right or truthfulness? Exalted is the personality of Allah's friend from such thoughts!

As for the reports narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt ('a), they affirm the substance of the story of the Torah but they exalt Ibrahim ('a) beyond any attribution of lie and other actions that are not appropriate for his noble character.

The most comprehensive story of Ibrahim (‘a) appears in al- Kafi: [al-Kulayni] from ‘Ali [ibn Ibrahim] from his father and a number of our companions from Sahl [ibn Ziyad], altogether from [al- Hasan] ibn Mahbub from Ibrahim ibn [Abi] Zayd al-Karkhi who said: I heard Abu ‘Abdillah [as-Sadiq] (‘a) saying:

“Verily Ibrahim was born in Kutha-Ruba⁴⁶ and his father hailed from that place. The mother of Ibrahim and the mother of Luqman, Sarah, and Waraqah (or Ruqayyah) were sisters who were daughters of Lahij; and Lahij was a prophet (nabi) but not a messenger (rasul).

During his youth, Ibrahim (‘a) was on the religion of fitra (the innate faith that Almighty Allah has created within the people) till He guided him to His religion and chose him.

He married Sarah, the daughter of Lahij, thus she was his maternal cousin. Sarah owned many sheep, vast land and had good status [financially]. She gave all her possessions to Ibrahim (‘a) who managed it, improved it; and the sheep and the agricultural produce increased to the extent that there was no one in Kutha-Ruba more financially stable than him.

When Ibrahim (‘a) smashed the idols of Namrud, the latter ordered him to be arrested and tied, and prepared an enclosure [for firebond] which was filled with firewood and the fire was lit in it. Then he ordered Ibrahim (‘a) to be thrown into the fire to burn him. Then they waited for the fire to die out and then went to the enclosure – lo, they found Ibrahim (‘a) safe from the bounds.

When Namrud was informed of this, he ordered to exile Ibrahim (‘a) from the town and to prevent him from taking his sheep and possessions. So, Ibrahim (‘a) protests against it and said: “If you take away my sheep and my wealth, then it is right upon you that you should return to me the time of my life that I spent in your town.” They took the issue to the judge of Namrud who pronounced the judgement that Ibrahim (‘a) should hand over what he has acquired in their town and that Namrud's people should return to Ibrahim (‘a) whatever of his life he spent in their town. Namrud was told of this judgement and he ordered them to leave him, his sheep and his wealth alone but to expel him [from the town]. He said: “If he says in your town, he will corrupt your religion and harm your gods.” So, they expelled Ibrahim along with Luqman (peace be upon both) from their land towards Syria. So, Ibrahim left with Luqman (who did not part from him) and Sarah. He said to them: **“Surely I am going to my Lord; He will guide me” (37:99)**, that is to al-Quds.

Ibrahim (‘a) took his sheep and wealth, and made a box and placed Sarah into it and locked it tightly out of sense of honour of her. He travelled until he left the realm of Namrud and reached the domain of an Egyptian known as ‘Ararah. Then he passed by the tithe collector who approached him to tax his possessions. When the tithe collector reached to the box, he said to Ibrahim (‘a): “Open this box so that we can tax what is in it.” Ibrahim (‘a) said: “Estimate whatever you like of gold or silver that can be in it so that we pay its tithe but don't open the box.” The tithe collector insisted to open it. Ibrahim (‘a) angrily opened the box. When Sarah – who was known for her beauty – appeared to him, the tithe collector asked: “What is this woman to you?” Ibrahim (‘a) said: “She is my wife and my maternal cousin.” The

tithe collector asked: "What caused you to hide her in the box?" Ibrahim ('a) said: "Out of sense of honour for her so that no one sees her." The tithe collector said: "I will not leave you till I inform the king about you and her."

The collector sent a messenger to the king with the information. The king sent a word to bring the box to him. When they came to take the box with them, Ibrahim ('a) said: "I will not leave the box until my soul leaves my body." They informed the king about him who said: "Bring him as well as the box with him."

So, they brought him, the box and all his possessions to the king. The king asked for the box to be opened. Ibrahim said: "O the King, in it is my wife and my maternal cousin. I am willing to sacrifice all that I have instead of opening it." The king forced Ibrahim ('a) to open it. When he saw Sarah, his conscience was not able to restrain his foolishness from extending his hand towards her. Ibrahim ('a) placed himself between him and her out of sense of honour and said: "O Allah! Prevent his hand from my wife and maternal cousin." His hand froze, neither could he reach her nor take it back towards himself. The king said: "Is it your Lord who has done this to me?" He said: "Yes; my Lord has sense of honour and dislikes something forbidden; He is the One Who has come between you and the immoral act that you intended to do." The king said: "Ask your Lord to return to me my hand [as normal]; if He responds positively, I shall not touch her." Ibrahim ('a): "O my Lord! Restore to him his hand so that he may stay away from my wife." The Almighty Allah restored his hand. The king then looked to her with his eyes, and then turned towards her with his hand. Ibrahim ('a) placed himself before him out of sense of honour and prayed: "O Allah! Prevent his hand from her." The king's hand became stiff [again] and couldn't reach her. The king said to Ibrahim ('a): "Indeed your Lord has sense of honour and so do you; ask your Lord to restore my hand; if He does so, I will not repeat [my mistake]." Ibrahim ('a) said: "I will pray to Him provided you don't ask me again to pray if you do the mistake again." The king said to him: "Yes." Ibrahim ('a) said: "O Allah: If is he true, then restore his hand." And so his hand was restored.

When the king saw the sense of honour and the [Divine] sign concerning his hand, he gave importance to Ibrahim ('a), respected him, honoured him and extended protection to him. He said to him: "You are indeed secure from me as far as she is concerned or what- ever that you possess; so go wherever you wish. But I have a request of you." Ibrahim ('a) said: "What is it?" He said: "I want you to allow me to serve her [Sarah] through a beautiful and intelligent Egyptian [slave] who will be her maid." Ibrahim ('a) agreed to it. So, the king called the maid and gifted her to Sarah; that maid was Hajar, the mother of Isma'il ('a).

Ibrahim ('a) continued his journey with all his possessions. [While bidding Ibrahim ('a) farewell,] the king walked behind him out of respect and honour for him. So, the Exalted Allah revealed to Ibrahim to stop and not walk ahead of a arrogant ruler, rather he should walk behind him as I have placed him ahead of you; so walk behind him out of respect and honour for him as he is in control and there must be a chief in the land, whether good or evil.

So, Ibrahim ('a) stopped and said to the king: "Go forward as my Lord has revealed to me momentarily

to respect and honour you, and to place you ahead of myself and to walk behind you out of respect for you.” The king said: “He revealed to you this?” Ibrahim (‘a) said: “Yes.” The king said: “I testify that your Lord is Friendly, Forbearing and Generous, and you are indeed attracting me to your faith.”

The king then bade Farwell to him. Ibrahim travelled until he reached northern part of Shāmūt (Greater Syria) and left Luṭ (‘a) in the southern part of Shamat.

When Ibrahim (‘a) was delayed in getting a child, he said to Sarah: “If you wish, you can sell Hajar [to me] hopefully, Allah can bless us with a child through her, and so he shall be an offspring for us.” So Ibrahim (‘a) bought Hajar from Sarah, had relations with her, and thereafter Isma‘il (‘a) was born⁴⁷.

E) Who Was The Sacrifice: Isma‘il Or Ishaq?

Among the inconsistencies of what has been mentioned in the Torah is the story of the sacrifice that the child to be sacrificed was Ishaq and not Isma‘il. It is so while the story of settling Isma‘il in the land of Tahamah (i.e., Mecca), building the Sacred Ka‘bah, instituting the ritual of pilgrimage which talks about suffering and hardships that he and his mother faced for the sake of Allah, and the ḥawaf (circumambulation around the Ka‘bah), the sa‘i (walking between the hills of Safa and Marwah), and the ritual of sacrifice – all these confirm that the sacrificed one was Isma‘il and not Ishaq (‘a).

The Gospel of Barnabas says that Jesus rebuked the Jews for their statement that the sacrificed one was Ishaq and not Isma‘il. In its chapter 44 (verses 11–12), it says: “Then spake God, saying to Abraham: ‘Take thy son, thy firstborn Ishmael, and come up the mountain to sacrifice him.’ How is Isaac firstborn, if when Isaac was born Ishmael was seven years old?”

As for the Qur’an, its verses are almost clear that the sacrificed son was Isma‘il (‘a). After describing the story of smashing the idols and him being put in the fire that Almighty had made cool and safe, He (s.w.t.) says:

“And they desired to outwit him (Ibrahim) but We made them the lowest” (37:98).

“And he said, “Surely I go to my Lord: He will guide me” (37:99).

“My Lord! Grant me (a son from) among the doers of good deeds” (37: 100).

“So We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy” (37: 101).

“And when he reached (the age of) working with him, he said, ‘O my son! Surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see.’ He said, ‘O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will surely find me of the patient ones’” (37: 102).

“So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead” (37: 103).

“We called out to him (saying): ‘O Ibrahim!’” (37: 104).

“You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus do We reward the doers of good” (37: 105).

“Most surely this is a manifest trial” (37: 106).

“And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice(37: 107).

“And We perpetuated (praise) to him among the later generations” (37: 108).

“Peace be upon Ibrahim” (37: 109).

“Thus, do We reward the doers of good” (37: 110).

“Surely he was of Our believing servants” (37: 111).

“And We gave him the good news of Ishaq, a prophet among the good ones” (37: 112).

“And We showered Our blessings on him and on Ishaq; and of their offspring are the doers of good, and (also) those who are clearly unjust to their own soul” (37: 113).

Anyone who reflects on the holy verses has no choice but to accept that the sacrificed son whose birth was annunciate by the Glorified Allah in His Words (So We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy), and that the other annunciation which He (s.w.t.) mentioned later on in that passage (We gave him the good news of Ishaq, a prophet among the good ones) is different from the first good tiding. The latter good news was about Ishaq (‘a) which is other than the one annunciated earlier and which is linked to the story of sacrifice.

The narrations in the Shi‘i sources from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) say that the sacrificed son was Isma‘il (‘a) whereas the narrations from the Sunni sources are different: some mention Isma‘il (‘a) and others mention Ishaq (‘a). However, you know that the first set of narrations are in accordance to the Qur’an.

* * *

Aṭṭ-Tabari, in his at-Tarikh, says: “The early scholars of the community of our Prophet Muhammad (S) differ on the son that Ibrahim was ordered to sacrifice. Some of them say that it was Ishaq while the others say it was Isma‘il. Indeed, both types of narrations have come from the Messenger of Allah (S). If there were an authentic narration among them, we don't need to refer to the other [but it is not so]. However, the proof from the Qur’an about validity of the narration which says that it was Ishaq is clearer and more obvious compared to the other version.”

He goes on to say: “As for the proof from the Qur’an that we said earlier that the narration of Ishaq is more correct, is based on Almighty's statement informing us of His friend Ibrahim's prayer when he left

from his people and migrated towards his Lord towards Greater Syria with his wife Sarah. He said: 'Surely I go to my Lord: He will guide me. My Lord! Grant me (a son from) among the doers of good deeds.' This was before he came to know Hajar and before Isma'il's mother came to him. Our Exalted Lord then continues the narration about accepting Ibrahim's prayer and giving him the good news of a forbearing son, and then Ibrahim's dream that he is sacrificing his son when he reached the age of working.

“And we don't know of any good news given to Ibrahim in the Qur'an about a male child except Ishaq; and that is His Word: ***'And his wife was standing (by), so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Ishaq and after Ishaq of Ya'qub' (11:71)***. And His words: So he conceived in his mind a fear on account of them. They said: ***"Fear not." And they gave him the good news of a boy possessing knowledge" (51:28)***. ***"Then his wife came up in great grief, and she struck her face and said: 'And old barren woman!'" (51:29)***.

“This is so because in all instances that the good news of a son to Ibrahim has been mentioned, God's good news to him is mentioned in relation to his wife Sarah. Therefore, it follows that the good news in His word: So We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy' is similar to other instances in the Qur'an which talks about the good news given to him from his wife Sarah.

“The objection that Allah did not order the sacrifice of Ishaq and that the good news from Allah about his birth and birth of Ya'qub came after him the sacrifice does not support the validity of what has been alleged otherwise. This is so because Almighty Allah indeed ordered Ibrahim to sacrifice Ishaq after Ishaq reached the age of working; and it is possible that Ya'qub was born before Ishaq's father was ordered to sacrifice him.

“Similarly, there is no ground for the objection to allege otherwise on basis of the sheep's horn seen hanging in the Ka'bah since it is not improbable that it was carried from Greater Syria to the Ka'bah and was hung in it.”

I wish I could know how aṭṭ-Tabari was oblivious to the fact that when Ibrahim ('a) prayed to his Lord for a son (when he migrated towards Greater Syria while Sarah was with him and there was no news of Hajar at that time), he prayed in the following words: My Lord! Grant me (a son from) among the doers of good deeds – he asked his Lord for a son but did not specify that he be granted through Sarah in order to link the good news that followed thereafter to the good news about Ishaq. He just said: “My Lord! Grant me...” and did not say, “My Lord, grant me through Sarah...”

As for aṭṭ-Tabari's statement that it is well-known from other instances in the Qur'an that the good news was about Ishaq and therefore the good news in this case should also be applied to him (and we shall discuss those instances later one) – this is itself a supposition without any proof. Rather the proof is against him because Almighty Allah, in these verses, mentioned the good news of “a forbearing son” followed by the story of sacrifice, and then again mentioned the good news regarding Ishaq. No one who

reflects on the context of these verses would doubt that the subject of the second good news is other than that of the first good news. Ibrahim ('a) was given the good news, before Ishaq, of another son and that is none other than Isma'il. The narrators, the reporters and the historians are all unanimous that Isma'il was born to Ibrahim before Ishaq.

F)

Among the examples of inconsistency is the obvious contrast in what the Torah says about Isma'il: it clearly says that Isma'il was born to Ibrahim before Ishaq by almost fourteen years and [then it says] that Ibrahim banished him and his mother Hajar after Ishaq's birth when he laughed at Sarah. Then it continues the story of their settlement in the desert and the running out of water that Hajar was carrying and about Isma'il's thirst, and that the angel showed her the water. Any serious reader of this story of Isma'il can discern that he must have been a breast-feeding infant at that time. So, you should reflect and ponder over those verses⁴⁸. And this is in accordance to what has come in our narrations.

6. The Torah Ignores Isma'il ('A)

The Holy Qur'an gives the best of attention to the story of Ibrahim ('a) himself as well as in relation to his two noble sons, Isma'il, Ishaq and their descendants. This is contrary to what we see in the Torah which exclusively pays attention to Ishaq and the Israelite people while it does not pay attention to Isma'il except to put him down and to degrade his status.

Even the sparse mention that it has in this regard is not without inner inconsistencies: it once mentions the Exalted Allah address to Ibrahim ('a) that 'verily your remaining descendants will be from Ishaq;' and then in another instance, it quotes His address that 'verily Allah will bless your descendants from seed of Isma'il and make him a great nation.' On the one hand, it describes him as a wild ass constantly fighting the people and the people fighting him, who grew up as an archer, banished from his father's home, and on the other hand, it says that God is with him!

G) Two Objections On The Qur'anic Narration Of Ibrahim ('A)

By pondering on what we said about the story of Ibrahim ('a) in the Qur'an, the response to two objections raised against the Holy Book will be clear.

First Objection

Some of the Orientalists have made an observation that the Qur'an, in its Meccan chapters, does not mention Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon them both) except in the way it mentions other prophets that they were on the monotheistic path, warning the people [against polytheism] and calling them toward the Glorified Allah. It does not mention the building of the Ka'bah and its connection to Isma'il, and that both [the father and the son] were calling the Arab people to the religion of nature and pure faith. However,

the Medinan chapters such as “al-Baqarah,” “al-Hajj” and other chapters describes the father–son relationship of Ibrahim and Isma‘il, and presents them as fathers of the Arab people to whom they introduced the religion of Islam and as builders of the Ka‘bah, the Sacred House of Allah.

“And the reason for this difference is that Muhammad relied on the Jews in Mecca. But so when they constantly took an antagonistic stand against him [in Medina]; he had to find other supporters. This is when his shrewdness led him to a new appraisal of Ibrahim as the father of Arabs – this is how he was able to distance himself from the Jews of his own time and establish his ties with 'Jewishness' of Ibrahim by considering him as the father of the Arabs, the founder of their religion (Islam), and the builder of their holy mosque in Mecca, a city which was preoccupation of his mind.[49](#)“

Reply: The Orientalists have degraded themselves by attributing such a lie to the Noble Qur’an, a book which is universally known and is not hidden to any easterner or westerner. Any serious scholar will notice that the Holy Qur’an does not flatter any polytheist or Jew or Christian neither in Meccan chapter nor in Medinan chapter; and its tone in rebuking the Jews and others does not change because of it Meccan or Medinan time of revelation.

However, since the Qur’anic verses were revealed gradually according to the events related to the religious call and since the challenges related to Jewish community occurred [in Medina] after the migration, obviously any remark about them and any explanation about their antagonistic attitude will be found in the verses that were revealed in numerous Medinan chapters. This is similar to the details of the religious laws that were revealed in Medina whenever the need was felt in relation to the events unfolding.

As for the claim of two Orientalists that any mention of the relation– ship of Isma‘il to Ibrahim, the building of the Ka‘bah and the establishment of the pure religion [of monotheism] is to be only found in the Medinan chapters, this is rejected by what the Almighty Allah has said in surah of “Ibrahim”, a Meccan chapter, when He quotes the prayer of Ibrahim:

“And when Ibrahim said, ‘My Lord! Make this city secure, and save me and my sons from **worshipping idols**’” (14:35).

“O our Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley uncultivated near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! That they may establish prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful” (14:37).

“Praise be to Allah, Who gave me in old age Isma‘il and Ishaq; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer” (14:39).

Similar verses revealed in surah of “as-Saffat” were quoted earlier about the story of the sacrifice.

As for the 'Jewishness' of Ibrahim (‘a), the Qur’an rejects that affiliation in the Word of the Almighty:

“O people of the Book! Why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?” (3:65).

“Ibrahim was not a Jew or a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists” (3:67).

Second Objection

The Sabaeans, the star-worshippers who have been mentioned in the Qur'an when Ibrahim confronted their gods by saying: So when the night over-showed him, he saw a star; he said, “This is my Lord...” lived in the city of Harran to which Ibrahim migrated from Babylon or from Ur. This means that his argument with the star-worshippers took place a while after his argument with idol-worshippers, the smashing of the idols, and him being put into the fire. This does not correspond to what appears in the Qur'anic verses that the arguments with the idol-worshippers and the star-worshippers happened altogether in two days within his arrival to his father and his people as discussed earlier.

Reply: This criticism is actually related to the interpretation that occurred in explanation of the relevant verses and not to the Qur'an itself.

Nonetheless, the critic has ignored the conclusions of history and the correct reflection in this matter.

As for the point of reflection: The religion of the Sabaeans was prevalent and famous in some major cities of the country those days, and so its presence in its other cities and the spread of its adherents in its various regions is not that a far-fetched idea.

A Brief History Of The Sabaeans

As far as history is concerned, it talks about the spread of the Sabaean faith like the spread of idol-worshipping in Babylon and the presence of many temples built in the names of the stars, and their corresponding idols were placed therein. The history of Babylon and its surrounding area talks about the temple of the sun-god and the moon-god around 3200 BC; and the names of the sun-god and the moon-god can even be seen carved in the Code of Hammurabi that was close to the era of Ibrahim ('a).

We have earlier quoted from al-Athar al-baqiyah of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni⁵⁰ 54 that Yudhasaf appeared in India at the end of the first year of the reign of Tahmurth; and he invented the [ancient] Persian script, and called the people to the Sabaean religion and a great many people followed him. It was also mentioned that the Pishdadian kings and some of the Kayanis who resided in Balkh held the sun, the moon, the planets, and the other elements in high esteem until Zoroaster appeared at the end of the thirtieth year of Peshtasav's reign.

al-Biruni's discussion continued to the point where he said that the Sabaeans attributed the management of all affairs to the sky and the heavenly bodies, and believed that they are living things

having the characteristics of speech, hearing and sight; they revered the light. One of their legacies is the dome above the niche in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus: it was their prayer house, and at that time even the Greeks and the Romans followed the same religion. With the passage of time, it came under Jewish control and they turned it into a synagogue. Later the Christians took it over and converted it into a church. Then came the Muslims, and they made it into a mosque.

He further said that the Sabaeans had numerous places of worship, and their idols were named after various names of the sun, and were shaped with fixed patterns, as mentioned by Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi in his book, *Buyut al-'ibadat*. For example, there was a temple of Ba'lbak that housed the idol of the sun; a temple of Qiran that was related to the moon and was built in its shape like a shawl worn over head and shoulders. And there was a village nearby, Salamsin by name which is corruption of its original name, Sanam Sin, the idol of the moon; likewise, there was another village called Tar'uz, that is, the gate of Venus.

They also claim that the Ka'bah and its idols belonged to them and that the Meccan idol-worshippers were adhering to the Sabaean religion; and that Lat (the [famous] idol) was named after Saturn and 'Uzza (another [famous] idol) was named after Venus. This is the summary of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's statement from *al-Athar al-baqiyah*.

al-Mas'udi says that the Sabaean religion perhaps evolved from idol-worshipping, and that it evolved from idol-worshipping perhaps because of the similarity in their origins. The idol-worshippers were worshipping the idols of the sun, the moon, the Venus and other stars in order to seek nearness to their gods and from them to the Supreme God.

al-Mas'udi, in *Muruju 'dh-dhahab*, says that most of the people of India, China and others nations believed that Allah, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, was a physical entity, and that angels have bodies with fixed dimensions and weights; they believed that Allah, the Sublime and His angels were concealed by the sky. This prompted them to adopt images and idols of various forms and shapes that they worshipped as representation of God's image or the angels' image, and some were in image of human being, etc. They used to offer sacrifices to the idols and made vows regarding them as a way of seeking nearness to the Almighty.

They continued on this for some time until some wise men among them pointed out to them that the planets and the stars were closest visible entities to Almighty Allah, and that they had characteristics of life and speech; and that the angels were the link between them and Allah. They also believed that whatever happens on this earth is the reflection of the movement of the stars based on Allah's command. So, they started venerating the stars and offering sacrifices to them so that they may benefit them. This continued for some time.

When they saw that the stars disappeared during the daytime and sometimes in the night also because of atmospheric obstructions, some of their wise men suggested to them to make idols and statues in

image of the stars – and so they ended up making idols and statues based on the number of the bigger and famous stars. Each group of them started venerating one of those stars and offering sacrifices to it that was different from what was offered by others. They believed that if they venerate the idols that they had carved, the seven celestial bodies will do for them whatever they wished. And they built an exclusive temple for each idol and named the temples by the names of those stars.

Some believe that the Sacred House [in Mecca] is the temple of the Saturn; and that this House has survived during the passing eras and venerated during most of its history because it is the temple of the Saturn; and the Saturn has protected it since longevity and stability is from its characteristics. They believed that anything related to the Saturn will not perish. They also believed in other superstitions whose narration here will tire the reader.

Anyhow, with the passage of time, they started worshipping the idols as a means of seeking nearness to God and abandoned the worship of the stars. They continued in this way until Yudhasaf appeared in India. Yudhasaf, an Indian, then left India for Sind and then went to Sajistan and Zabulistan (these were ruled of Firuz bin Kabak), and then he went back to Sind and then to Kirman. Then he claimed to be a prophet and thought that he was God's messenger, and an intermediary between God and the people. He came to Persia at the beginning of the reign of Tahmurth, the Persian king; some say that it was in reign of King Jam. Yudhasaf is the first to start the Sabaeen traditions as we mentioned earlier in this book.

Yudhasaf called people towards asceticism in this world, and to concentrate on the higher spiritual realm that is the origin of the human souls and is considered the heart of this world. By proposing some specious arguments, he revived the worship and veneration of the idols among the people; and by using a variety of deceitful and dubious means, he justified idol-worshipping in their minds.

Those who are expert in this area and this era of history say that it was King Jim [of Pishdadian dynasty] who glorified the fire and called the people to venerate it. He used to say that the fire resembles the light of the Sun and the stars, and light was in his views better than darkness. He also believed that light has a variety of degrees. Those who came after him went their different ways in venerating whatever they thought would get them closer to the Almighty Allah.

al-Mas'udi then describes their major temples which were seven in number: The Ka'bah was the temple of Saturn; a temple at the top of Mars mount near Isfahan; the temple of Mandustan in India; the temple of Nawbahar, near Balakh, named after the Moon; the temple of Ghamdan, in San'a' (Yemen), named after Venus; the temple of Kawsan, in Farghanah, named after the Sun; a temple in highlands of China, named after the First Cause. And there were major temples in Greece, Rome and in the lands of the Slavs that were named after the stars such as the temple of Venus in Tunis.

Then al-Mas'udi mentions that the Sabaeans of Harran⁵¹ had temples named after the substantial ideas and stars such as the temple of the First Cause, the temple of intellect, the temple of chain [of cause and

effect], the temple of physical form, and the temple of soul – all these were built in a circular form. Then there was the temple of Saturn in hexagonal form, the temple of Jupiter in a triangle form, the temple of Mars in a square form, the temple of the Sun in a square form, the temple of Mercury in a triangle form, the temple of Venus which was internally in a triangle form and externally in a square form, and the temple of Moon in a octagon form. As we mentioned earlier, the Sabaeans have codes and secrets that they conceal [from others]. This is the end of what al-Mas'udi had said and it is similar to what ash-Shahristani has mentioned in his al-Milal wa 'n-nihal.

Conclusion

From what we have described, the followings become clear:

Firstly, the polytheists who worshipped idols as their gods also worshipped images of stars, the sun and the moon, and that they had temples named after them. Therefore, it is possible that Ibrahim's argument against the stars, the moon and the sun was with the polytheists who believed in them also and not with the Sabaeans. It is also possible that it was against some Sabaeans in the city of Babylon or Ur or Kutha-Raba as mentioned in some narrations quoted earlier.

The story as narrated in the Holy Qur'an apparently shows that Ibrahim ('a) argued against his father and his people, and patiently endured their aggression for the sake of Allah until he separated himself from them and abandoned them by emigrating from their land towards the holy land without first diverting his journey to Harran and then from there to the holy land. What the history books have said about his migration first to Harran and then from Harran to the holy land has no basis other than the Torah or some unreliable reports from the Isra'elite spittles ☞ this is obvious to anyone who ponders upon Tarikh of a☞-Tabari and other sources. Moreover, some sources⁵² mention that the Harran described in the Torah was a city near Babylon between Euphrates and Khabur, and that it is other than the present-day Harran which is near Damascus.

Yes, al-Mas'udi mentions that the remnant of the major Sabaeans' temples during this time – that is year 332 AH – is a temple in the city of Harran at the Babu 'r-Raqqah known as Maghlitiya and that is known among them as the temple of Azar, the father of Ibrahim al-Khalil ('a). The Sabaeans have many stories on Azar and his son Ibrahim ☞ of course; none of their statements has any validity.

Secondly, just as the polytheists were sometimes worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars, similarly the Sabaeans erected places of worship and temples for worship of entities other than the stars, the moon and the sun. They even established temples for the First Cause, the intellect, the soul, etc., just like the idol-worshippers and sought nearness to them. Herodotus, in his History, describes the temple [of Jupiter] in Babylon that it consisted of eight towers raised upon one another and that the topmost tower had a spacious temple, and inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side. There were no statue of any kind set up in the temple, nor was the temple occupied of nights by anyone except a single whom the people affirmed to be chosen by Allah for

service and companionship⁵³.

Perhaps this temple [at the eighth tower of Babylon] was dedicated to the First Cause which is devoid of any shapes and images even though sometimes they would portray Him as per their own imaginations as mentioned by al-Mas'udi. It is confirmed that their philosophers deemed Almighty Allah above the physical forms, shapes and material attributes, and described Him with appropriate qualities. These philosophers, however, were afraid of the masses in expressing their true belief about Allah either because the people did not have the capacity to understand that aspect or because of political expediency and interest that compelled them to hide the truth.

¹. Refer to 19:49.

². Refer to 21:51; 21:52; 26:69-77; 37:83-87.

³. Refer to 6:73-82.

⁴. Refer to 21:57-71; 37:88-98.

⁵. The proof of the faith of some of his community members can be seen in: Indeed, there is for you a good example in Ibrahim and those with him when they said to their people, "Sure we disassociate from you..." (60:4); and the proof that he had married before leaving for the holy land can be seen in his prayer for a righteous son from his Lord in: And he said, "Surely I go to my Lord; He will guide me; my Lord! Grant me (a son from) among the doers of good deeds." (37:100).

⁶. Refer to 60:4; 21:71.

⁷. Refer to 2:126; 14:35-41.

⁸. Refer to 2:127-129; 3:96-97.

⁹. Refer to 22:26-30.

¹⁰. Refer to 14:35-41.

¹¹. To be precise, the name of Ibrahim ('a) has occurred sixty-nine times in the Qur'an. Of course, his mention without using his name would be more than that (tr.)

¹². Refer to 21:51.

¹³. Refer to 6:79.

¹⁴. Refer to 2:260; 6:75.

¹⁵. Refer to 4:125.

¹⁶. Refer to 53:37.

¹⁷. Refer to 11:73-75.

¹⁸. Refer to 16:120-122.

¹⁹. Refer to 19:41.

²⁰. Refer to 37:83-111.

²¹. Refer to 38:45-46.

²². Refer to 2:124.

²³. Refer to 33:7; 42:13; 87:18-19.

²⁴. Refer to 4:54; 6:74-90; 43:28

²⁵. Refer to 57:26.

²⁶. Refer to 26:84; 19:50.

²⁷. As quoted in Majma' al-bayan from Tafsir al-Qummi.

²⁸. The Book of Genesis, chap. 11, vrs. 26-32 (tr.).

²⁹. The Book of Genesis, chap. 12, vrs. 1-20 (tr.).

- [30.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 13, vrs. 1–12 (tr.).
- [31.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 14, vrs.8–12 (tr.).
- [32.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 14, vrs. 13–16 (tr.).
- [33.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 14, vrs. 17–24 (tr.).
- [34.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 16, vrs. 1–16 (tr.).
- [35.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 17, vrs. 1–8 (tr.).
- [36.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 17, vrs.9–12 (tr.).
- [37.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 17, vrs. 15–22 (tr.).
- [38.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap.21, vrs. 1–8 (tr.).
- [39.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap.21, vrs.9–13 (tr.).
- [40.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 21, vrs. 14–21 (tr.). In Islamic narrations, Isma'il's wife was from the Jurham, a Yemeni tribe. (Author's note)
- [41.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 22, vrs. 1–8 (tr.)
- [42.](#) The Book of Genesis, chap. 22, vrs. 9–19 (tr.).
- [43.](#) In the Book of Genesis, chapters 11 to 25.
- [44.](#) Some commentators have explained this by saying that this Melchizedek was the same as Amraphel, the king of Shinar, mentioned in the earlier part of the story, and that he was actually Hammurabi, the author of the Hammurabi Code, who was from the early kings of Babylon.
- [45.](#) See al-Mizan, Eng. transl., vol. 3, p. 204. (tr.)
- [46.](#) It was a suburb of Kufah, and al-Jazari [in Mu'jam al-buldan, vol.4, p.487] has written it as 'Kuthi.' (Author's note)
- [47.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 8, p. 370–373; in its new edition produced and annotated by Dar al- Hadith (Qum), see vol. 15, p. 815–819. (tr.)
- [48.](#) Quoted earlier from The Book of Genesis, chap. 21, vrs. 14–21.
- [49.](#) This has been quoted by an-Najjar in Qisas al-anbiya' [Beirut: Ihyau 'l-Turathi 'l- 'Arabi, n.d.; p.73–74] from [Snouk] Hurgronje and [Arent Jan] Wensinck in [the Arabic version of] the Encyclopedia of Islam [vol.1, p.28]. (Author's note)
- [50.](#) See al-Mizan [Eng. transl.], vol.1, p.278, under "A Historical Discussion" [2:62], (tr.)
- [51.](#) Since Sabaeen faith was prevalent in Harran, the Sabaeans were also known as Harraniyun. (Author's note)
- [52.](#) Qamus al-kitabi 'l-muqaddis under "Harran".
- [53.](#) The History of Herodotus, a Greek historian of circa 500 BC. See The History of Herodotus, translated and edited by George Rawlinson, vol.1 (NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1885) bk.1, ch.179.

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