

# What is Eid al-Adha?

by **Yusef Vanderkimpen**<sup>1</sup>

Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Raheem, 'in the name of God, The Beneficent, The Merciful'

To my fellow believers in the God of Ibrahim

In Islam, we have two main festivals. One at the end of the fast of the month Ramadan and one 70 days later called Eid al-Adha or Feast of Sacrifice. Eid signifies 'feast' in Arabic and al-Adha 'the sacrifice'.

This feast is the height of the Hajj or Pilgrimage in the Holy city of Mecca in Arabia. Everywhere Muslims even not doing the Hajj do the Sacrifice.

What we do as Muslims is the reenactment of the Sacrifice Ibrahim<sup>2</sup> (peace be upon him<sup>3</sup>) did in obedience to Allâh at a mountain. He asked to sacrifice his only begotten son, Isma'eel<sup>4</sup> as a test and a lesson for all generations to come. At the dramatic moment Ibrahim (pbuh) wanted to obey Allâh, Allâh stopped him (through an angel) and a ram was provided to do an alternative sacrifice.

The test of all tests. Ibrahim (pbuh) had no children with his first wife Sarah. Sarah arranged marriage with her maid Hajar as is told in the Torah so Ibrahim (pbuh) would have children. Hajar gave birth to Isma'eel (pbuh), who was later at the age of 13 years circumcised on the same day as his father Ibrahim (pbuh) and entered a covenant.

What are the lessons we can learn while we are as Muslims sacrificing the day of the Eid al-Adha?

First that we have, as our forefather Ibrahim (pub), to obey Allâh in all what He asks of us. Even if this is something that we feel as too much. And honestly Allâh request nothing so heavy to us as He did to Ibrahim (pbuh). Some may think that the requirement of modesty is a burden – for women, the hijab. Or praying 5 times a day, especially waking up before sunrise. But all of this is in the light of what our forefather Ibrahim (pub) did not so a great sacrifice. Ibrahim (pbuh) had no children for a long time. He was 86 years old when our mother Hajar bore him Isma'eel (pbuh). Now Allâh was asking him to give up his only begotten son! Think about this.

The second lesson is that Allâh gives with the test also an outcome. For Ibrahim (pbuh) it was a ram instead of his son Isma'eel (pbuh). It must have been a great relief for Ibrahim (pbuh) not to have to do this act. It is as the Qur'an says, "After every difficulty, there is a relief."

As the Qur'an clearly says, because of Ibrahim's obedience he became the Imam for mankind. And is it not so that the tree monotheistic religions refer to him as founding father and spiritual guide?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim in Arabic ابراهيم, Avraham in Hebrew אַבְרָהָם, Abraham in English

<sup>3</sup> It is an Islamic custom each time you read or hear the name of one of Allâhs prophets to say a blessing. In Arabic 'alayhi s-salām عليه وسلم; abbreviation PBUH

<sup>4</sup> Isma'eel إسماعيل in Arabic, Ishmael ישמעאל in Hebrew

<sup>5</sup> Al\_baqarah (2): 124 "And [remember] when his Lord tried Ibrahim with [certain] words, and he fulfilled them. He said, "I am making you an imam for mankind. ..."

This experience of Ibrahim (puh) should bring us comfort during a period of severe trials. There is always a way out, a solution or a reward, even if it is in the afterlife.

And does it fill us not with a lot of respect for that man and nabi<sup>6</sup> Ibrahim (pbuh) who became the father of many nations and is the forefather of the Arabs, the Jews and spiritual of the Christians? Let's follow his example of full dedication and obedience to the will of Allâh, who knows what is best for us all.

### **Details of this story:**

#### **Who was to be sacrificed?**

It is clear that in the Torah it is Ishaq<sup>7</sup> and nobody else, this is what Jews and Christians believe.

In short, what does the Torah teach? Ibrahim (pbuh) was married to Sarah, but she could not have children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl who she gave to Ibrahim (pbuh) as the second wife so he could become a father and had someone who would inherit from him. The slave girl when pregnant became arrogant against her mistress. Sarah complains to Ibrahim (pbuh) who said, "do as you like with here". The slave girl runs away, and an angel told her to go back and put up with what Sarah does to you. Later Sarah became pregnant and she finds that the child of the slave girl is not nice with her son and asks Ibrahim (pbuh) to send him and his mother away because 'the son of the slave girl' will not inherit with my son. Ibrahim (pbuh) is terribly upset, but Allâh tells him to listen to Sarah. Ibrahim (pbuh) took his second wife and young son and send them away in the desert with some water and bread. The slave girl throws the young lad under a bush and begins to cry because she runs out of water. At new an angel appeared and comforted the slave girl and showed here a well not fare of them. Back to Ibrahim, Allâh asks him to sacrifice his only begotten son Ishaq (pbuh) but he is stopped at time and a ram is provided in replacement. ...

The Qur'an focuses on Ibrahim's (pbuh) incorruptible believe in Allâh and follower of the Monotheistic belief and not so on his family life. But briefly, the sacrifice is mentioned in chapter 37 al-Saffat 90-113. We can read there:

'Then he turned to their âlihah (gods) and said: "Will you not eat (of the offering before you)? (91) "What is the matter with you that you speak not?" (92) Then he turned upon them, striking (them) with (his) right hand. (93) Then they (the worshippers of idols) came, towards him, hastening. (94) He said: "Worship you that which you (yourselves) carve? (95) "While Allâh has created you and what you make!" (96) They said: "Build for him a building (it is said that the building was like a furnace) and throw him into the blazing fire!" (97) So they plotted a plot against him, but We made them the lowest. (98) And he said (after his rescue from the fire): "Verily, I am going to my Lord. He will guide me!"

(99) "My Lord! Grant me (offspring) from the righteous." (100) So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy. (101) And, when he (his son) was old enough to walk with him, he said: "O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you (offer you in sacrifice to Allâh), so look what you think!" He said: "O my father! Do that which you are commanded, Inshâ' Allâh (if Allâh will), you shall find me of As-Sâbirun (the patient)." (102) Then, when they had both submitted themselves (to the Will of Allâh), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (or on the side of his forehead for slaughtering); (103)

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<sup>6</sup> Arabic Nabi: prophet

<sup>7</sup> Ishaq إِيْشَاق in Arabic, Yitzhaq in Hebrew יִצְחָק, Isaac in English

And We called out to him: "O Ibrahim!"<sup>8</sup> (104) You have fulfilled the dream!" Verily! thus do We reward the Muhsinûn (good-doers – see V.2:112). (105) Verily, that indeed was a manifest trial.<sup>9</sup> (106) And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice (i.e. كيش – a ram)<sup>10</sup>;

(107) And We left for him (a goodly remembrance) among the later generations. (108) Salâmun (peace) be upon Ibrâhim (Ibrahim)!" (109) Thus indeed do We reward the Muhsinûn (good-doers – see V.2:112). (110) Verily, he was one of Our believing slaves. (111) And We gave him the glad tidings of Ishâq a Prophet from the righteous. (112) We blessed him and Ishâq, and of their progeny are (some) that do right, and some that plainly wrong themselves.<sup>11</sup> (113)

In verse 101 is told that Ibrahim (pbuh) received a dream to sacrifice his son.<sup>12</sup> Which son? No name is given, but as a reward of Ibrahim's (pbuh) obedience in verse 111 it is told that "And We gave him good news of Ishaq, a prophet, one of the righteous." So, as a logical conclusion the first son is nobody else as Isma'eel (pbuh) and the second as a reward is Ishaq (pbuh).

The Biblical narrative says as follow: "Now after this, the true God put Ibrahim to the test, and he said to him: "Ibrahim!" to which he replied: "Here I am!" 2 Then he said: "Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Ishaq, and travel to the land of Mo-ri'ah and offer him up there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will designate to you." – Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 22:1-2.

Those verses are in the Torah after the chapter where Ibrahim (pbuh) send away his first son Isma'eel (pbuh) and his mother Hajar. So how can it be that Allâh said ... "your only son whom you so love, Ishaq" (pbuh)? Was Isma'eel (pbuh) no longer the son of Ibrahim (pbuh)? Jewish and Christian commentaries told us that Isma'eel had disinherited and also no longer the son of his father. But the Torah contradicts this clear when it tells us at Ibrahim's funeral his two sons Isma'eel and Ishaq buried him. "The years of Ibrahim's life were 175 years. 8 Then Ibrahim breathed his last and died at a good old age, old and satisfied, and was gathered to his people. 9 His sons Ishaq and Ish'ma-el buried him in the cave of Mach-pe'lah in the field of E'phron the son of Zo'har the Hit'tite that is in front of Mam're." Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 25: 7-9.

So, it is clear Isma'eel (pbuh) (he was 89 at that time) was still Ibrahim's (pbuh) son and secondly, he was in contact with his father and half-brother Ishaq (pbuh). The rabbinic

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<sup>8</sup> Before Ibrahim (pbuh) could sacrifice his son, Allâh called to him, and when he turned, Ibrahim (pbuh) found a fine white-horned ram to take his son's place in the Sacrifice. According to some accounts, the horns of this ram were kept in the Ka'bah, but were lost when the Ka'bah burned down in 68/683. This substitution of the ram for Ibrahim's (pbuh) son serves as a basis for the ritual of slaughtering an animal that is required as the final rite of the hajj.

<sup>9</sup> That the command to sacrifice is described as a trial is also understood to mean that it was a blessing, as it is through severe trials that Allâh brings His pious servants the best reward in this life and in the next, if they are able to faithfully endure them, as did Ibrahim (pbuh).

<sup>10</sup> According to tradition, the great sacrifice that ransomed the son was a ram that had grazed in the Garden of Paradise for forty years and was brought to Ibrahim (pbuh) by the angel Jibr'eel. (Imad al-Din Abu-I-Fida Isma'il 'Umar ibn Kathir ( d. 774/1373), Tafsir al-Qur'an al-azim.

<sup>11</sup> That there will be both *the virtuous* and *those who clearly wrongs themselves* among their progeny can be understood as a reminder that merely being descendants is not sufficient to salvation; the must also be believers and perform good deeds. In this way it is seen as a response to the attitude of some Jews and Christians when they say, *We are children of God, and His beloved ones* (Qur'an 5:18).

<sup>12</sup> As we believe in Islam when a prophet has a dream it is always a true dream, not as often by ordinary people. We can in this light understand that Ibrahim (pbuh) was willing to obey his dream.

tradition takes the possibility of reconciliation even further. In one midrash<sup>13</sup>, found in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 30, Ibrahim (pbuh) visits Isma'eel's home twice after the banishment, even offering him marital advice, thus partially rectifying the relationship between father and son.<sup>14</sup>

If we read the whole story in the Torah, we see that there is an effort to disgrace Isma'eel and his mother Hajar. It is as if the Jews want to prove that only they are Allâh chose ones. But even the Qur'an recognizes that Allâh has a special bond with the Beni Isra'eel (the Sons of Israel), it will not say others cannot worship the only true God. And yes, the Land of Canaan or Palestine was given to them as is also written in the Qur'an,<sup>15</sup> because Allâh has foreseen that the grandchildren through Ishaq (pbuh) will inherit this part of the world.<sup>16</sup> Later Allâh gave a condition to the children of Isra'eel – only if they obeyed Him they will have peace in the land and stay there.<sup>17</sup> We see that there is no peace today in that part of the world. The oppression of the Arab Muslims and Arab Christians who lived there for so many generations is a disgrace and against the way Jews must treat other worshippers of the Only True God. "You must not oppress a foreign resident. You know it feels to be a foreigner, because you were foreign residents in the land of Egypt." (Safar al-Khuruġ (Exodus) 23:9)

"In the tale of binding (surah 37:99-110) Muhammad identified the son who was to be sacrificed as Ishmael and, indeed, the opinion of the traditionalists was also divided on

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<sup>13</sup> A Jewish ancient commentary on part of the Hebrew scriptures, attached to the biblical text. The earliest Midrashim come from the 2nd century AD, although much of their content is older.

<sup>14</sup> This is incorporated in the Islamic tradition, in the Hadiths. Ibrahim (pbuh) tells him to divorce his first wife, who was so inhospitable towards strangers, and then to bless his second choice of wife, since she freely offered him food and water. In this latter source, the Islamic tradition exerts a strong influence, See the discussion and the impact of the Islamic context of its composition in Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill 2008), 35-42. These lines linking our parallel destinies, Muslim and Jew, through history and sacred text should serve as a basis for dialogue, a means of bridging the divide between the sons of Sarah and Hajar, the children of Ishaq (pbuh) and the children of Isma'eel (pbuh).

<sup>15</sup> "And (remember) when Musa (Moses) said to his people: "O my people! Remember the Favour of Allâh to you, when He made Prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you what He had not given to any other among the 'Alamîn (mankind and jinns, in the past). "O my people! Enter the holy land (Palestine) which Allâh has assigned to you, and turn not back (in flight) for then you will be returned as losers." (Al-Ma'idah 5: 20-21)

<sup>16</sup> Tafsir, peshar, Hebrew for interpretation: Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (838-923), who says about the Al-Ma'idah 5: 20-21 "a narrative from Allâh... concerning the saying of Moses... to his community from among the children of Israel and his order to them according to the order of Allâh to him, ordering them to enter the holy land." Al-Tabari's commentary also notes that the word "decreed" — *kataba* in Arabic, related to Hebrew *katav*, "written", in Hebrew — has the connotations of "ordered": in other words, settling the land was regarded as a *mitzvah* (law) for the children of Israel. Al-Tabari also observes that the decree is confirmed in *al-lawh al-mahfuz*, the eternally preserved tablet" — a reference to the Islamic idea that in heaven exists a sacred blueprint from which the Muslim, Christian and Jewish scriptures emanate, hence the covenant with the Jewish people over Israel is everlasting.

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 19:5 "Now if you will strictly obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will certainly become my special property out of all peoples, for the whole earth belongs to me." Some verses in the Tanah give the impression that the special status of Israel is unconditional, but Allâh said that His position can change over time when there is a departure of obeying his Law. Compare with 2 Kings 17:19-22 'Even Judah did not keep the commandments of JHWH their Allâh; they also walked in the customs that Israel followed. 20 JHWH rejected all the descendants of Israel and humiliated them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them away from before him. 21 He ripped Israel away from the house of David, and they made Jer-o-bo'am the son of Ne'bat king. But Jer-o-bo'am caused Israel to stray from following JHWH, and he caused them to commit a great sin. 22 And the people of Israel kept walking in all the sins that Jer-o-bo'am had committed. They did not depart from them 23 until JHWH removed Israel from his sight, just as he had declared through all his servants the prophets. So, Israel was taken into exile from its land to As-syr'i-a, where they remain to this day.' See also Deuteronomy 28:45, 63; 1 Kings 14:16; Hosea 1:4; Amos 5:27.

this subject. It is related that a renowned traditionalist of Jewish origin, from the Qurayza tribe, and another Jewish scholar, who converted to Islam, told Caliph Omar Ibn Abd al-Azîz (717-20) that the Jews were well informed that Isma'eel was the one who was bound, but that they concealed this out of jealousy. The Muslim legend also adds details of Hajar (Hagar), the mother of Isma'eel. After Ibrahim drove her and her son out, she wandered between the hills of al-Safa and al-Marwa (in the vicinity of Mecca) in search for water. At that time, the waters of the spring Zemzem began to flow. Her acts became the basis for the hallowed custom of Muslims during the Hajj."<sup>18</sup>

"Another proof of our speech [i.e., that sacrificed was Isma'eel (pbuh) is reported by Ibn Ishâq: "Muhammad Ibn Ka'b narrated that Umar Ibn Abd al-Azîz sent for a man who had been a Jew then converted to Islam and showed signs of true Islam. [Before his conversion], he was one of their scholars [i.e., he was a Jewish scholar] So he [i.e., Umar] asked him: which son did Ibrahim (pbuh) sacrifice? He replied: 'It is Ishmael(P). By Allâh, O Commander of the Believers, the Jews know that, but they envy you - the Arabs."<sup>19</sup>

Ibn Kathir says on Qur'an 37:101: (So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy.)

"This child was Isma'eel, peace be upon him, for he was the first child of whom glad tidings were given to Ibrahim, peace be upon him, and he was older than Ishaq. The Muslims and the People of the Book agree, and indeed it is stated in their Book, that Isma'il, peace be upon him, was born when Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was eighty-six years old, and Ishaq was born when Ibrahim was ninety-nine years old. According to their Book, Allâh commanded Ibrahim to sacrifice his only son, and in another text it says his firstborn son. But here they falsely inserted the name of Ishaq. This is not right because it goes against what their own Scripture says. They inserted the name of Ishaq because he is their ancestor, while Isma'il is the ancestor of the Arabs. They were jealous of them, so they added this idea and changed the meaning of the phrase "only son" to mean "the only son who is with you," because Isma'il had been taken with his mother to Makkah. But this is a case of falsification and distortion, because the words "only son" cannot be said except in the case of one who has no other son.

Ibn Kathir-May Allâh have mercy on him- makes it even quite clearer.

The truth is that the reports stating that the Sacrificed is Ishaq are part of the Isrâ'îliyyât due to the People of the Book, it was transmitted by those who converted among them like Kab al-Ahbâr and it was conveyed [from the converts] by some Companions and Followers [tâbiûn] as sign of trust. Later, the scholars who came after them were fooled by such reports and supported that the Sacrificed was Ishaq. Every book of exegesis [tafsîr] or biography or even history would mention the argument that took place among the salaf. However, some [of those books] would follow the argument by outlining the truth and others wouldn't add any commentary either by conviction or surrender [to these reports]."

### **What was the reason Isma'eel (pbuh) had to be sent away?**

Sarah orders the banishment of Hajar and her son on the basis what seems to be a trifle.

"And Sarah saw the son of the Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Ibrahim, playing [מצחק metzaheq]." Safar al Takwin (Genesis) 21:9 The participle form of the verb

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<sup>18</sup> Encyclopaedia Judaica, Volume 9, Encyclopaedia Judaica Jerusalem, pp. 82 (Under 'Ishmael')

<sup>19</sup> Abû al-Fadl Shihâb-uddîn al-Alûsî, Ruh al-Macâni fi Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Adhîm wassab' al-Mathâni, Part 23, p. 135.

tzḥq (in the intensive piel), meaning “to laugh, play, or mock,” has no direct object. With whom or what was Ishmael playing?

The Greek Jewish translation – The Septuagint (the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE) text is giving an interpretation: ‘he was playing/sporting with her son, Ishaq.’ This reading does not explain why Sarah has him exiled. Playing seems innocent between half-brothers. Some suggested that perhaps Sarah sees Isma’eel (phuh), the son of her maidservant as lower than her son, and their playing together suggests that they might be equals.

In the midrashic tradition (in Genesis Rabbah (53:11), Rashi implicates Isma’eel (pbuh) three cardinal sins: idolatry, illicit sexual relations, and murder and this based on the resonances throughout the Tanakh<sup>20</sup> with the root tzḥq.<sup>21</sup>

Interesting is the view or comment on this event by the scholar Robert Alter. “Given the fact, moreover that she is concerned lest Ishmael encroach on her son’s inheritance, and given the inscription of her son’s name in the crucial verb, we may also be invited to construe it as “Ishaq-ing-it’ [יִשְׂחָק מֵצָהֵק]. – that is, Sarah sees Ishmael presuming to play the role of Ishaq, child of laughter, presuming to be the legitimate heir.”<sup>22</sup>

In the book of Jubilees, a retelling of Genesis 1 through Exodus 12 there is no hint of “foul” play on Isma’eel’s (pbuh) part. On the contrary, the image presented is endearing, warm, and touching:

‘In the first year of the fifth week, in this jubilee, Ishaq was weaned. And in the first year of the fifth week Ishaq was weaned in this jubilee, [1982 A.M.] and Ibrahim made a great banquet in the third month, on the day his son Ishaq was weaned. And Ishmael, the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, was before the face of Ibrahim, his father, in his place, and Ibrahim rejoiced and blessed Allâh because he had seen his sons and had not died childless. And he remembered the words which He had spoken to him on the day on which Lot had parted from him, and he rejoiced because the Lord had given him seed upon the earth to inherit the earth, and he blessed with all his mouth the Creator of all things. And Sarah saw Ishmael playing and dancing, and Ibrahim rejoicing with great joy, and she became jealous of Ishmael and said to Ibrahim, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman will not be heir with my son, Ishaq.’ And the thing was grievous in Ibrahim’s sight, because of his maidservant and because of his son, that he should drive them from him.’

The image is one of a celebration in which Ibrahim (pbuh) rejoiced. He was “very happy,” not because “the Lord had given him descendants” Furthermore, Ibrahim (pbuh) is portrayed as being very much involved in Isma’eel (pbuh), who is seated “in his place in front of his father,” whose “playing and dancing” delights Ibrahim (pbuh).

In Jubilees, as in Safar al Takwin (Genesis), Isma’eel’s (pbuh) playing is not inherently negative.

But in verse 10 the real reason is given why she wanted that Isma’eel (pbuh) was send away: “So she said to Ibrahim: “Drive out this slave girl and her son, for the son of this slave girl *is not going to be an heir along with my son, with Ishaq!*”

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<sup>20</sup> Jewish part of the Bible (Old Testament)

<sup>21</sup> Genesis Rabbah 53:11, T. Sota 6:6, and Sifre Deut. 31. Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (PRE 30) however, ignores this exegetic tradition, and reports that Ishmael was merely playing a deadly game of “William Tell” (with bows and arrows). PRE, which was composed in a post-Islamic milieu (mid-8th c.), did not find it appropriate to saddle the ancestor of Muhammed and the ancient founder of the Muslim faith with idolatry.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Alter, GENESIS (New York: Norton 1996), p. 98.

Under the patriarchal system, upon the death of the father the oldest son became the head of the family, with authority over the others if they were in the household. He was responsible to care for the members of his father's household. He also succeeded to the father's position in representing the family in acts of worship.

So, Sarah was afraid that one day after Ibrahim's death (pbuh) Isma'eel (pbuh) would become the head of the family. We can easily understand that Sarah deeply regretted that she suggested marrying Hajar to Ibrahim (pbuh). What Sarah did not understand is Allâh's generosity. Allâh had promised that great nations would descend from Ibrahim (pbuh). Ishaq (pbuh) became the father of a great nation, just as Allâh promised... and so did Ishmael. We are told that Allâh met Isma'eel (pbuh) in the wilderness, and stayed with the boy as he grew up, and made him the father of a great nation, too.

Interesting it that under the Mosaic Law given in that a man with more than one wife could not take the birthright from the oldest son and give it to the son of a specially loved wife. —Safar al-Tathnia Deuteronomy 21:15-17.<sup>23</sup>

The banishment of Isma'eel (pbuh), then conforms to the pattern of the "overturn of primogeniture," the younger son as the chosen heir to the covenant, trumps the right of the firstborn. Unlike the scene of blessing between Ishaq and Yakub (Jacob) (27:18-29), where the blind father does not realize Esau (Esau), the firstborn, is being displaced, this definitive scene of exclusion entails conscious complicity on the part of the patriarch to cut his firstborn son out of the inheritance and out of the covenant.

Throughout this passage, Isma'eel (pbuh) is not once mentioned by name. The passage maximizes his anonymity, reducing the "heir apparent" to the level of a passive object, a mere pawn in the divine plan.<sup>24</sup> The phrase, "her son," without the name Isma'eel (pbuh), counters "my son ... Ishaq." The description "the slave women," rather than "my maid" (cf. 16:2), increases the distance between Hajar and Sarah. Not only is the possessive adjective my missing, but also a change in nouns connotes a change in status. From being a maid (*shipha*) to Sarai in scene one, Hajar had become a slave (*'ama*).

If we take time to read in the book Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) from chapter 15 until 25 we will see that a key element in those chapters is who will be the heir of Ibrahim (pbuh). An attentive reader will remark that the story leads to the point Ishaq (pbuh) and his descendants will inherit the land of Canaan or Palestine and so was.

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<sup>23</sup> "If a man has two wives and he loves one more than the other and both have borne sons to him and the firstborn son belongs to the unloved one, 16 on the day that he gives his inheritance to his sons, he will not be allowed to treat the son of the loved one as his firstborn at the expense of the son of the unloved one, the firstborn. 17 He should recognize as the firstborn the unloved one's son by giving him the double portion of everything he has, for that one is the beginning of his procreative power. The right of the firstborn's position belongs to him." - This principle that the first-born receives the double portion (that is double the share of his brothers' inheritance), finds parallels in Assyrian, Hittite, and Nuzi legal records in the Ancient Near East. See the discussion in Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 184–87, and 190, n.22. For a discussion of the principle in Jewish sources, see Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*, 55-60, and Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Isma'eel (pbuh) is referred to as "the son [ben]", "the boy [yeled]," or "the youth [na'ar]." The epithet "son [ben]" (x 5) is an effect of focalization: Isma'eel is "her son [בְּנֵיהָ]" through Sarah's eyes in v. 9 and 10 (x2), and v. 12; his son [בְּנוֹ] in Ibrahim's eyes (v. 11). He is also called "the boy [הַיְלֵד]" (x 3, vv. 14, 15, and 16), a neutral or distancing term deployed by the narrator and by Hagar, after she casts him away. And is he referred to as "the youth [הַנְעָר]", which is Allâh's or the angel's term for him, as in vv. 12, 17 (x2), 18, 19 and 20.

But what about Isma'eel (pbuh) what will he inherit? As we can read in the Torah, he became the father of many sons<sup>25</sup> and ruled over a large land from near Egypt to Assyria.<sup>26</sup> This is the end of the story. The poor were sent away by Sarah's will and by Allâh's permission.

### **Negative thoughts about Hajar and her son Isma'eel (pbuh)**

Many references to Hajar and Isma'eel (pbuh) in Jewish literature and the copies of this by Christians depicted a negative image of them.

In the Torah, Hajar is merely seen as a 'slave girl' a 'maidservant'. But Rabbinical commentators asserted that Hajar was Pharaoh's daughter. The midrash Genesis Rabbah states it was when Sarah was in Pharaoh's harem that he gave her his daughter Hajar as a servant, saying: "It is better that my daughter should be a servant in the house of such a woman than a mistress in another house". Sarah treated Hajar well, and induced women who came to visit her to visit Hajar also. However, Hajar, when pregnant by Ibrahim (pbuh), began to act superciliously toward Sarah, provoking the latter to treat her harshly, to impose heavy work upon her, and even to strike her (ib. 16:9).

When Sarah requested Ibrahim (pbuh) to send away Hajar and Isma'eel (pbuh) Allâh had to tell, according to the Torah, to listen to Sarah. Here in Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 21:12-13 Allâh is speaking about Hajar without naming here by name of as the wife of Ibrahim (pbuh), but as 'your slave girl' and about his son as 'the son of the slave girl'. Seriously is it so that a second wife must be treated and your first son?

And another commentary tells us that the Keturah<sup>27</sup> who became the wife of Ibrahim (pbuh) after Sarah's dead was none other than Hajar<sup>28</sup>. She gave Ibrahim (pbuh) six other sons, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah, ancestors of various North Arabian tribes dwelling to the South and East of Palestine. Our blessed forefather Ibrahim (pbuh) was about 140 years old at that time and he had the time to see growing up those children for 35 years before he died. All this is proof that Ibrahim (pbuh) still loved Hajar and had a hard time with Sarah as a jealous wife.

After Ishaq (pbuh) is born Sarah insisted that Hajar and Isma'eel where send away because "the son of this slave girl is not going to be an heir along with my son, Ishaq!"<sup>29</sup> What harsh words for somebody she herself has given as the second wife to her husband.<sup>30</sup> Sarah was driven by jealousy, but the narrative wants us to believe that Isma'eel was 'mocking' Ishaq. Some sources go so far to suggest that Isma'eel was an idolater and others that he was sexually abusing his half-brother Ishaq – Allâh forbid.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> As later Ishaq (pbuh) became the father in Yakub (pbuh), who became the father of 12 tribes, Isma'eel (pbuh) became the father of 12 tribes.

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 25:12-18

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 25:1

<sup>28</sup> Some Jewish commentators identify Hagar with Keturah (Aramaic: קֶטוּרָה Qəṭurāḥ), the woman Ibrahim married after the death of Sarah, stating that Ibrahim sought her out after Sarah's death. It is suggested that Keturah was Hagar's personal name, and that "Hagar" was a descriptive label meaning "stranger". This interpretation is discussed in the Midrash and is supported by Rashi, Judah Loew ben Bezalel, Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, and Obadiah ben Ibrahim Bartenura. Rashi argues that "Keturah" was a name given to Hagar because her deeds were as beautiful as incense (hence: ketores), and/or that she remained chaste from the time she was separated from Ibrahim—קֶטוּרָה derives from the Aramaic word "restrained".

<sup>29</sup> Genesis 21:10

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 16:3

<sup>31</sup> Tosefta (Sotah 6:6) <https://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/vayera/maoz.html>

Another Jewish source says: 'Shortly after Ishaq's birth, people began referring to Ishmael as Hagar's boy.<sup>32</sup> The seed of jealousy and hate began to grow in Ishmael, corrupting him. When he was about 15, he brought idols into his tent and began worshipping them, mimicking the Canaanite neighbours.<sup>33</sup> He would also go out into the field and shoot arrows at Ishaq, all the while pretending to playfully shoot birds.'<sup>34</sup>

All these assumptions have no historical basis but is only slander.

I question in how far those Jewish sources are reliable. Take as example about a comment on Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 25:5,6 'Later on Ibrahim gave everything he had to Ishaq, 6 but Ibrahim gave gifts to his sons by his concubines. Then while he was still alive, he sent them eastward, away from Ishaq his son, to the land of the East.'

What is the comment on these gifts by the well-respected Babylonian Talmud? The Babylonian Talmud (tractate Sanhedrin 91a) provides an interesting anecdote; 'that among the gifts given to the children of Keturah by Ibrahim were the secrets of the dark arts, which according to Rashi was an unholy name to invoke presumably for the practice of sorcery. With what we know from the scriptures themselves and what we'd like to think of Ibrahim, this may sound implausible; certainly, we do not want to think Father Ibrahim would have anything to do with such things.' Note, this is the same Rashi who said about Isma'eel (pbuh) that he was guilty of three cardinal sins: idolatry, illicit sexual relations, and murder!

Isma'eel (pbuh) was a blessed person and even an angel came down to reassure Hajar that he will be the father of a great nation.<sup>35</sup> Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) is a descendant of Ibrahim (pbuh) through him.<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that an angel performed twice in favor of Isma'eel (pbuh). And the second time in the Torah is when he is sent away. If, according to Jewish sources, Isma'eel (pbuh) was such a bad person, why would Allâh send his angel and thus look after him? I think this is only slander against one of the prophets of Allâh.

The difficulty in discerning the meaning of several biblical references to Isma'eel (pbuh) contributes to his ambiguous role in the patriarchal narratives. What, for example, does it mean that he will be a *pere adam*, a "wild ass of a man," that his hand will be against all, that he will live *'al pene*, "in the face of" his kinsmen?

Wenham says the following: "This verse describes Ishmael's future destiny, to enjoy a free-roaming, Bedouin like existence. The freedom his mother sought will be his one day. The *pere*, 'wild ass,' lives in the desert, looks more like a horse than a donkey, and is

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<sup>32</sup> Zohar vol.1 118b

<sup>33</sup> Midrash Shemot Rabbah 1:1

<sup>34</sup> Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 30.

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 16:7-16; an-Nisa – The Women 4: 47 "O you who were given the Book! Believe in what We sent down, confirming what you have, before We obliterate faces and turn them inside out, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers. The command of Allâh is always done."

<sup>36</sup> According to Islamic prophetic tradition, Muhammad (pbuh) was descended from Adnan. Tradition records the genealogy from Adnan to Muhammad (pbuh) comprises 21 generations. Various genealogies of Adnan up to Isma'eel have been narrated. Adnan was the ancestor of the Adnani Arabs of northern, central and western Arabia and a direct descendant of Isma'eel. It is not confirmed how many generations are between them; however, Adnan was close to Isma'eel. Isma'eel had twelve sons who are said to have become twelve tribal chiefs throughout the regions from Havilah to Shur (from Assyria to the border of Egypt). Genealogists differ from which son of Isma'eel the main line of descent came, either through his eldest son Nabut, or his second son Qedar who was the father of the North Arabian Qedarite tribe that controlled the region between the Persian Gulf and the Sinai Peninsula. \* Ref.: Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari. The History of al-Tabari. 6. p. 37. The genealogists do not differ concerning the descent of our Prophet Muhammad as far as Ma'add b. 'Adnan.

used in the OT as a figure of an individualistic lifestyle untrammelled by social convention" (Jer. 2:24; Hos. 8:9).<sup>37</sup>

Roger Syren also consider Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 16:7-14 as expressing a favorable, or at least neutral position toward Isma'eel (pbuh): Elsewhere in the Bible the wild ass is the typical unfettered wild animal, alone and free to go its own way (Hos. 8:9; Job 39:5). ... In Hos 8:9 and Jer. 2:24, the animal serves as an illustration of Israel's apostasy; as the wild ass in her heat exposes herself to her mates, Israel lustfully submits itself to foreign gods. Apart from this, nothing pejorative is associated with the wild ass – and in this instance its symbolized Israel and not her seducers. Like the wild ass, Ishmael is predestined to a solitary, wandering life. In this respect he can be compared to Cain, although unlike Cain, the biblical narrator does not impute any crime or guilt to Ishmael. Yet...Ishmael's life... is not unlike Cain's: both are sent away from their own family and community.<sup>38</sup>

In a similar way, the scholar Nahum M. Sarna (Understanding Genesis 1966) writes: Like the wild ass among the beasts, so are the Ishmaelites among men. In their nature and destiny the call to mind the sturdy, fearless, and fleet-footed Syrian onager (Heb. *Pere'*), who inhabits the wilderness and is almost impossible to domesticate ... Hagar, the abused slave women subjected to the harsh discipline of her mistress, will produce a people free and undisciplined.

What did the messenger of Allâh mean when he told Hajar that her son shall be a *pere' adam*, "a wild ass of a man, his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him: he shall dwell alongside all his kinsmen"?

Whether or not the description of Isma'eel (pbuh) as a "wild ass of a man" is deemed negative seems more to depend upon one's own bias than on the context.

Maybe we must see the whole picture! Hajar runs away from Sar'ai who began to humiliate [or afflict] her.<sup>39</sup> Allâh's angel came to tell her to go back and gave her good news and comforting words. "Then JHWH's angel said to her: "I shall greatly multiply your seed, so that it will not be numbered for multitude." 11 Further JHWH's angel added to her: "Here you are pregnant, and you shall give birth to a son and must call his name Ish'ma-el; for JHWH has heard your affliction."<sup>40</sup>

And then is added "As for him, he will become an ass of a man. His hand will be against everyone, and the hand of everyone will be against him; and before the face of all his brothers he will tabernacle."<sup>41</sup>

Isma'eel (pbuh) will be a free man, a Bedouin. As so it was. The Arabs are until this day proud that they are descendants of Bedouins. I have visited myself some of them in the weekend tents where they turn back to the simple way of life and returned after a weekend in their houses to take their regular job at the office during the week.

### **Details about the Banishment**

Blessed Ibrahim (pbuh) had not an easy life as all prophets did. His life was filled with tests and tribulations. Young, he defied the idolaters and he fought different wars. His nephew Lot's men made trouble with those of Ibrahim (pbuh) and the only solution was

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<sup>37</sup> Wenham's The Word Biblical Commentary 1987

<sup>38</sup> The Forsaken Firstborn: A Study of a Recurrent Motif in Patriarchal Narratives

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 16:6 'So A'bram said to Sar'ai: "Look! Your maidservant is at your disposal. Do to her what is good in your eyes." Then Sar'ai began to humiliate her so that she ran away from her.'

<sup>40</sup> Genesis 16:10, 11

<sup>41</sup> Genesis 16:12

to let Lot choose where to live (Lot choose the most beautiful part of the land). And at a certain point in his life Sarah, his first wife, asked him to send the second wife Hajar away with her son.<sup>42</sup> Ibrahim (pbuh) was terribly upset with this idea. Allâh has explicit to say to him listen to Sarah.

As Ibrahim (pbuh) saw no solution for Hajar and Isma'eel, he trusted in Allâh to protect them, believing in Allâh's promise to make of Isma'eel a great nation.

"So, Ibrahim got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin bottle of water and gave it to Ha'gar. He set these on her shoulder and then sent her away along with the boy. So, she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Be'er-she'ba. 15 Finally the water in the skin bottle was used up, and she pushed the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went on and sat down by herself, about the distance of a bowshot away, because she said: "I do not want to watch the boy die." So, she sat down at a distance and began to cry aloud and to weep. 17 At that Allâh heard the voice of the boy, and Allâh's angel called to Ha'gar from the heavens and said to her: "What is the matter with you, Ha'gar? Do not be afraid, for Allâh has heard the voice of the boy there where he is. 18 Get up, lift the boy and take hold of him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." 19 Then Allâh opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the skin bottle with water and gave the boy a drink.<sup>43</sup> 20 And Allâh was with

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<sup>42</sup> Genesis 21:10-13 So she said to Ibrahim: "Drive out this slave girl and her son, for the son of this slave girl is not going to be an heir along with my son, with Ishaaq!" 11 But what she said about his son was very displeasing to Ibrahim. 12 Then Allâh said to Ibrahim: "Do not be displeased by what Sarah is saying to you about the boy and about your slave girl. Listen to her, for what will be called your offspring will be through Ishaaq. 13 As for the son of the slave girl, I will also make a nation out of him, I because he is your offspring."

<sup>43</sup> Hadith 4:584 narrated by Ibn Abbas: "When Ibrahim had differences with his wife, (because of her jealousy of Hajar, Ishmael's mother), he took Ishmael and his mother and went away. They had a water-skin with them containing some water, Ishmael's mother used to drink water from the water-skin so that her milk would increase for her child. When Ibrahim reached Mecca, he made her sit under a tree and afterwards returned home. Ishmael's mother followed him, and when they reached Kada', she called him from behind, 'O Ibrahim! To whom are you leaving us?' He replied, '(I am leaving you) to Allâh's (Care).' She said, 'I am satisfied to be with Allâh.' She returned to her place and started drinking water from the water-skin, and her milk increased for her child. When the water had all been used up, she said to herself, 'I'd better go and look so that I may see somebody.' She ascended the Safa mountain and looked, hoping to see somebody, but in vain. When she came down to the valley, she ran till she reached the Marwa mountain. She ran to and fro (between the two mountains) many times. Then she said to herself, 'I'd better go and see the state of the child,' she went and found it in a state of one on the point of dying. She could not endure to watch it dying and said (to herself), 'If I go and look, I may find somebody.' She went and ascended the Safa mountain and looked for a long while but could not find anybody. Thus she completed seven rounds (of running) between Safa and Marwa. Again, she said (to herself), 'I'd better go back and see the state of the child.' But suddenly she heard a voice, and she said to that strange voice, 'Help us if you can offer any help.' Lo! It was Gabriel (who had made the voice). Gabriel hit the earth with his heel like this (Ibn 'Abbas hit the earth with his heel to illustrate it), and so the water gushed out. Ishmael's mother was astonished and started digging. (Abu Al-Qasim) (i.e. the Prophet) said, "If she had left the water, (flow naturally without her intervention), it would have been flowing on the surface of the earth." Ishmael's mother started drinking from the water and her milk increased for her child. Afterwards some people of the tribe of Jurhum, while passing through the bottom of the valley, saw some birds, and that astonished them, and they said, 'Birds can only be found at a place where there is water.' They sent a messenger who searched the place and found the water, and returned to inform them about it. Then they all went to her and said, 'O Ishmael's mother! Will you allow us to be with you (or dwell with you)?' (And thus they stayed there.) Later on her boy reached the age of puberty and married a lady from them. Then an idea occurred to Ibrahim which he disclosed to his wife (Sarah), 'I want to call on my dependents I left (at Mecca).' When he went there, he greeted (Ishmael's wife) and said, 'Where is Ishmael?' She replied, 'He has gone out hunting.' Ibrahim said (to her), 'When he comes, tell him to change the threshold of his gate.' When he came, she told him the same whereupon Ishmael said to her, 'You are the threshold, so go to your family (i.e. you are divorced).' Again Ibrahim thought of visiting his dependents whom he had left (at Mecca), and he told his wife

the boy as he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an archer. 21 He took up dwelling in the wilderness of Pa'ran,<sup>s</sup> and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt." – Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 21:17-21

As we can read here Isma'eel was a small boy when he was sent away with his mother. "She pushed the boy under one of the bushes. .... Get up, lift the boy and take hold of him with your hand." It was this child that was according to Sarah a danger for Ishaq (pbuh)?

Some Islamic sources confirm that Isma'eel was a young child and that he was still breastfed. And Allâh knows best what the truth is, because if Isma'eel (pbuh) was sent away as a baby how could he be a treat for his younger half-brother Ishaq (pbuh). So, my conclusion is that Isma'eel (pbuh) was a young man when he was sent away with his mother. This is also the conclusion of Ibn Katheer (may Allâh have mercy on him): "And, when he (his son) was old enough to walk with him" means, when he grew up and was able to take care of himself, like his father. Mujaahid said: "And, when he (his son) was old enough to walk with him" means, when he grew up and was able to ride and walk and work as his father did. When this happened, then Ibrahim (pbuh) saw a dream in which he was commanded to sacrifice this son of his."

In the Islamic narrative the story does not end here.

Ibrahim (pbuh) contrary to the Jewish story does not let Hajar and Isma'eel dwell in the wilderness. He took them to the valley where late the city of Makkah was established.<sup>44</sup> Then he gave them over to the care of Allâh.

When the little amount of dates and water left by Ibrahim (pbuh) was over within few days, she felt thirsty and her infant son Isma'eel was crying to death. She ran madly between the two nearby hillocks of Safa and Marwah looking for water. She ran seven times. The hills and hillocks echoed with her cries. This was an ordeal, a great ordeal of Allâh. She cried again and again but called none except Him. Allâh showered His mercy upon her, and a forceful spring of sweet water gushed out near Isma'eel's feet. She called it Zamzam and it is flowing at the same place for the last 4,000 years. Almighty Allâh declared Safa and Marwah as His signs and ordained the pilgrims to run seven times between them like His devoted Hajar: "Behold! Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allâh. So, if those who visit the House in the Season or at other times, should compass them round, it is no sin in them. And if anyone obeyed his own impulse to Good, be sure that Allâh is He Who recognized and knoweth." (2:158)

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(Sarah) of his intentions. Ibrahim came to Ishmael's house and asked. "Where is Ishmael?" Ishmael's wife replied, "He has gone out hunting," and added, "Will you stay (for some time) and have something to eat and drink?" Ibrahim asked, 'What is your food and what is your drink?' She replied, 'Our food is meat and our drink is water.' He said, 'O Allâh! Bless their meals and their drink.' Abu Al-Qa-sim (i.e. Prophet) said, "Because of Ibrahim's invocation there are blessings (in Mecca)." Once more Ibrahim thought of visiting his family he had left (at Mecca), so he told his wife (Sarah) of his decision. He went and found Ishmael behind the Zam-zam well, mending his arrows. He said, "O Ishmael, Your Lord has ordered me to build a house for Him." Ishmael said, "Obey (the order of) your Lord." Ibrahim said, "Allâh has also ordered me that you should help me therein." Ishmael said, "Then I will do." So, both of them rose and Ibrahim started building (the Ka'ba) while Ishmael went on handing him the stones, and both of them were saying, "O our Lord ! Accept (this service) from us, Verily, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (2.127). When the building became high and the old man (i.e. Ibrahim) could no longer lift the stones (to such a high position), he stood over the stone of Al-Maqam and Ishmael carried on handing him the stones, and both of them were saying, 'O our Lord! Accept (this service) from us, Verily You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (2.127)"

<sup>44</sup> Hadith 4: 583 [https://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/bukhari/bh4/bh4\\_586.htm](https://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/bukhari/bh4/bh4_586.htm)

Later Ibrahim (pbuh) visited at different occasions his son in Mecca and at one of them he told him that Allâh has requested to build a house for him or the Ka'bah.

"125. And We made the House a focal point for the people, and a sanctuary. Use the shrine of Ibrahim as a place of prayer. And We commissioned Ibrahim and Isma'eel, "Sanctify My House for those who circle around it, and those who seclude themselves in it, and those who kneel and prostrate." 126. When Ibrahim said, "O My Lord, make this a peaceful land, and provide its people with fruits—whoever of them believes in Allâh and the Last Day." He said, "And whoever disbelieves, I will give him a little enjoyment, then I will consign him to the punishment of the Fire; how miserable the destiny!" 127. As Ibrahim raises the foundations of the House, together with Isma'eel, "Our Lord, accept it from us, You are the Hearer, the Knower. 128. Our Lord, and make us submissive to You, and from our descendants a community submissive to You. And show us our rites, and accept our repentance. You are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Merciful. 129. Our Lord, and raise up among them a messenger, of themselves, who will recite to them Your revelations, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. You are the Almighty, the Wise." 130. Who would forsake the religion of Abraham, except he who fools himself? We chose him in this world, and in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous. 131. When his Lord said to him, "Submit!" He said, "I have submitted to the Lord of the Worlds." Al-Baqarah (2): 125-131

Vers 125 refers to the Ka'bah, also called the House of God or the Sacred Mosque, which was built by Ibrahim (pbuh) and Isma'eel (pbuh) (see v. 127). In pre-Islamic times, the Ka'bah and the precinct surrounding it was a sanctuary, in that a murderer, for example, would be safe within it, which would have been seen as a continuation in some sense of the original status as established by Ibrahim (pbuh).

Commentary on verse 127: Some commentators relate this verse to 22:26<sup>45</sup>, where Allâh assigns or designates the place of the House. In 3:96 the Qur'an states, "Truly the first house established for mankind was that of Bakkah, an alternative pronunciation of Makkah also referenced in the Bible (Psalm 84:16)<sup>46</sup>.

### **The Covenant of Circumcision**

Let's go back to the time Isma'eel (pbuh) was still member of the household of Ibrahim (pbuh).

We will discuss here the Biblical text.

"Allâh said further to Ibrahim: "As for you, you are to keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant between me and you, that you and your offspring after you will keep: Every male among you must get circumcised. 11 You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it will serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 Throughout your generations, every male among you eight days old must be circumcised, anyone who is born in the house and anyone who is not one of your offspring and who was purchased with money from a foreigner. 13 Every man born in your house and every man purchased with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant in your flesh must serve as a lasting covenant. 14 If any uncircumcised male will not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person must be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant."

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<sup>45</sup> "And remember when We assigned for Ibrahim the place of the House, [saying], "Ascribe no partners unto Me, and purify My House for those who circumambulate, and those who stand, and those who bow and prostrate." Al-Hajj (22):26

<sup>46</sup> "When they pass through the Ba'ca Valley, They make it into a place of springs; And the early rain clothes it (Or possibly, "And the instructor enwraps himself.") with blessings."

15 Then Allâh said to Ibrahim: "As for your wife Sar'ai, you must not call her Sar'ai, because Sarah will become her name. 16 I will bless her and also give you a son by her; I will bless her and she will become nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 At this Ibrahim fell facedown and began to laugh and to say in his heart: "Will a man 100 years old have a child born to him, and will Sarah, a woman 90 years old, give birth?"

18 So Ibrahim said to the true Allâh: "O that Ish'ma·el might live before you!" 19 To this Allâh said: "Your wife Sarah will definitely bear you a son, and you must name him Ishaq. And I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant to his offspring after him. 20 But as regards Ish'ma·el, I have heard you. Look! I will bless him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him very, very much. He will produce 12 chieftains, and I will make him become a great nation.<sup>47</sup> 21 However, I will establish my covenant with Ishaq, whom Sarah will bear to you at this appointed time next year."

22 When Allâh finished speaking with him, he went up from Ibrahim. 23 Ibrahim then took Ish'ma·el his son and all the men born in his house and everyone he had purchased with money, every male in the household of Ibrahim, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins on that very day, just as Allâh had spoken with him. 24 Ibrahim was 99 years old when he had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised.<sup>48</sup> 25 And Ish'ma·el his son was 13 years old when he had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised. 26 On that very day, Ibrahim was circumcised and also his son Ish'ma·el. 27 All the men of his household, anyone born in the house and anyone purchased with money from a foreigner, were also circumcised with him." Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 17:14-27

When non-Jewish people think about Jews one of the first few things, they know is that Jews are circumcised. Jews call this Covenant of Circumcision, Brit Milah or Bris. In rabbinic literature, this is also called bri-to shel Avraham Avinu (the covenant of Abraham our father) (Avot 3:11), or brit kodesh (the holy covenant) (Berachot 14a). One male who is circumcised at the eight-day, born from a Jewish mother, became a Jew at that moment when the mohel (circumciser) has removed the foreskin of the penis.

"For Jews, the circumcision demonstrates the submission to G-d by marking the physical body with the sign of the covenant. This covenant with G-d surpasses human comprehension. It is a bond that pledges unconditional devotion, no matter what may transpire between G-d and individual. It is a bond that is absolute and unchallengeable. For this reason, a Jew is circumcised as an infant, when he has not yet developed his capacity for reasoning or making judgements, for the covenant of circumcision is not an intellectual or calculated partnership. The circumcision of an infant demonstrates that the connection between the Jews and G-d is beyond rationale." (Dovid Zaklikowski<sup>49</sup>)

Later when Allâh through His prophet Musa<sup>50</sup> (pbuh) made a new covenant [sefer ha-brit] at mount Sinai He repeated the obligation for circumcision. As we can read in Safar al-Laaween (Leviticus) 12: 1-3 "YHWH went on to say to Moses: 2 "Tell the Israelites, 'If a

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<sup>47</sup> See 1 Chronicles 1:29-31 "These are their family origins: Ish'ma·el's firstborn Ne-ba'ioth, then Ke'dar, Ad'be-el, Mib'sam, 30 Mish'ma, Du'mah, Mas'sa, Ha'dad, Te'ma, 31 Je'tur, Na'phish, and Ked'e-mah. These were the sons of Ish'ma·el."

<sup>48</sup> Islamic source: Al-Bukhaari (6298) and Muslim (2370) narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allâh be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allâh (peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him) said: "Ibrahim (peace be upon him) circumcised himself when he was eighty years old, and he circumcised himself with an adze." An adze is a carpenter's tool. Abu Ya'laa narrated that 'Ali ibn Rabaah said: "Ibrahim was commanded to circumcise himself, so he circumcised himself with an adze and it was very painful for him. Then Allâh revealed to him saying, "You rushed to do it before We told you what tool to use." He said, "O Lord, I did not want to delay obeying Your command."

<sup>49</sup> From the website Chabad article: Why Circumcise?

<sup>50</sup> Arabic Musa, Hebrew Moshe, English Moses

woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a male, she will be unclean for seven days, just as she is in the days of the impurity when she is menstruating. 3 On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin will be circumcised.”

Also, the prophets Yahya (John the Baptist – pbuh) was circumcised as was Isa (Jesus – pbuh) the eight-day – because they were born in a family that was Jewish and stick to the Law given through Musa (pbuh) at mount Sinai. (Luke 1:59 and Luke 2: 21,22)

For Jews the circumcision a sign of Jewishness and make them unique amongst the nations. But as we can read in their Kitaab the Torah Ibrahim (pbuh) circumcised all the male members of his household and Isma'eel (pbuh), who was 13 years old at that time.

What could be the practical meaning of circumcision? Many Islamic scholars see it as an act to keep the penis clean from urine. And a Muslim must be pure not only spiritual when partaking in worship, but also physical.<sup>51</sup>

When Ibrahim (pbuh) circumcised himself, he perfected his din<sup>52</sup> – because Allâh said in the Torah to Ibrahim (pbuh) “I am God Almighty. Walk before me and prove yourself faultless [blameless]. 2 I will establish my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you very, very much.”<sup>53</sup> and the following verses Allâh gives the instruction to circumcise. Also, circumcision for all those in the House of Ibrahim (pbuh) is linked to spiritual and physical cleanness.

As we could read here in chapter 17 when God asked Ibrahim (pbuh) to circumcise as a sign of a covenant, He said – according to the Bible we have today in our possession – in verses 15-21 that this covenant was to be with a son that would be born later by Sarah and not with Isma'eel (pbuh). After God said that and “finished speaking with him”, Ibrahim (pbuh) took Isma'eel (pbuh) his son and he circumcised him... “On that very day, Ibrahim was circumcised and also his son Isma'eel.” (vers 26).

Or this chapter 17 is manipulated and the verses 15-21 are added in the story to glorify Ishaq (pbuh) and exclude Isma'eel (pbuh) from the covenant and his blessings or Ibrahim (pbuh) did not understand what he was doing.<sup>54</sup>

Some questions: If the covenant was so unique and only made for the Jews, why all members of Ibrahim’s (pbuh) household were to be circumcised?

For me, the fact that all members, who were all worshippers of Allâh, had to be circumcised proves that the covenant here is one of physical purity in combination with blameless conduct. For all future generations, all descendants of Ibrahim (pbuh), if is through Isma'eel or Ishaq (pbuh) must be circumcised. That all those who convert to one of the Ibrahimic religions must also be circumcised is proven in the words that “Every man born in your house and every man purchased with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant in your flesh must serve as a lasting covenant.” (verse 13) They were not of the offspring of Ibrahim (pbuh) but they became part of his household. Also converts,

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<sup>51</sup> Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allâh have mercy on him) said: “in the case of men, it serves an interest which has to do with one of the conditions of prayer, namely purity (tahaarah), because if the foreskin remains, when the urine comes out of the urethra, some of it will collect there, and this causes burning and infection every time the person moves, and every time the foreskin is squeezed, some drops of urine come out, thus causing najaasah (impurity).” Publication 206942 Q&A Islam

<sup>52</sup> Dīn is an Arabic word with three general senses: judgment, custom, and religion. It is used by both Arab Muslims and Christians. In Islam, the word refers to the way of life Muslims must adopt to comply with divine law, encompassing beliefs, character, and deeds.

<sup>53</sup> Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 17: 1, 2

<sup>54</sup> Astaghfirullah

to say non descendants in the flesh of Ibrahim (pbuh) become members of his household and have the blessing and curse when well or not circumcised.

Another question: Why didn't God wait until Ishaq (pbuh) was born to introduce circumcision and the covenant?

If the covenant of circumcision was only a covenant for the Jews, as they say, why Isma'eel was first circumcised before even Ishaq (pbuh) was born? Does it not seem logical to wait after Isma'eel was sent away to introduce this covenant? The answer is that the covenant is not the same covenant as that which Allâh made with the Beni Isra'eel at the mount Sinai through Musa (pbuh).<sup>55</sup> This covenant is the only and unique covenant Allâh made with the Jews. The Ibrahimic covenant is universal for all those who submit themselves to the God of Ibrahim, Isma'eel, Ishaq, Yakub (pbuh).

The khitan (circumcision), also known as Tahara (purification) makes it also possible to become part of the group of worshippers, if it is Jewish or Islamic. Muslims are currently the largest single religious group in which the practice is widespread. It is also believed that the grandfather Abd al-Muttalib of Muhammad (pbuh) circumcised him as the tradition was amongst the offspring of Isma'eel (pbuh).<sup>56</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim said: Allâh sent our Prophet from amongst the Arabs, and He gave him attributes of physical perfection and made him of fine lineage. So how could it be possible that he was born circumcised? It was said that circumcision was one of the words with which Allâh tested His Close Friend Ibrahim, and he fulfilled this word, and the most severely tested of mankind are the Prophets, then the next best and the next best. The Prophet listed circumcision as one of the features of the fitrah and being tested with this and carrying out this command with patience will multiply the reward. It is more befitting that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him) should not miss out on this virtue and that Allâh should honor him in the same way as He honored Ibrahim, because he is more virtuous than any other Prophet.<sup>57</sup>

Circumcision was introduced to many lands for the first time through Islam itself following the early Muslim conquests under the Rashidun<sup>58</sup>, who were the companions and contemporaries of Muhammad (pbuh). An example are the Persians, which practised neither male nor female circumcision before the advent of Islam. Post-Islamic converts such as Afshin were found guilty in trials of remaining uncircumcised;<sup>59</sup> this further indicates that the practice was deemed compulsory by the early Muslims.

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<sup>55</sup> The Qur'an recognize that there was a covenant between Beni Isra'eel and Allah in al-Baqarah (2), 93.

<sup>56</sup> Some believe that Muhammad (pbuh) was born circumcised, but Ibn al-Qayyim ruled all of the hadith are da'eef (weak). Another believe is that the angel Jibr'eel (Gabriel) circumcised him when he opened his chest to clean his heart. The hadeeth about the angel splitting open his heart was narrated through many isnaads going back to the Prophet; it does not mention in any of them that Jibr'eel circumcised him, except in this hadeeth which is shaadh ghareeb (odd and strange). Tuhfat al-Mawood, 206. / Ibn Qayyim said in Zaad al-Ma'aad (1/28): This issue arose between two righteous men. One of them wrote a book saying that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him) was born circumcised and compiled in it ahaadeeth which are not sound at all. His name was Kamaal al-Deen ibn Talhah. He was criticized by Kamaal al-Deen ibn al-'Adeem who explained that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him) was circumcised according to the custom of the Arabs. As this was the custom of all of the Arabs, there is no need for a report (to prove that he was circumcised).

<sup>57</sup> Tuhfat al-Mawlood, 205-206

<sup>58</sup> The four first khalifs.

<sup>59</sup> Šakūrzhāda, Ebrāhīm; Omidsalar, Mahmoud (October 2011). "Circumcision". Encyclopædia Iranica. V/6. New York: Columbia University. pp. 596–600. Archived from the original on 19 January 2020. Retrieved 7 February 2020.

Islam is a religion that encompasses all aspects of life and circumcision is an act pertaining to the 'Fitrah'. Fitrah is an Arabic term used to represent the innate disposition and natural character and instinct of human creation. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: 'Five are the acts quite akin to fitrah: Circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, cutting the nails, plucking the hair under the armpits and clipping (or shaving) the moustache.'<sup>60</sup>

There is a lot to say on the khitan tradition in Islam. Some circumcised the 7th day or 7 years and other around puberty – 13<sup>th</sup> years as Isma'eel (pbuh). But why not follow the commandment to circumcise the 8th day as Allâh told Ibrahim (pbuh) to do? Some think it is a pure Jewish thing to do it the 8<sup>th</sup> day and want not to be associated with Judaism. But there are even scientific It is of significant medical importance that male circumcision be carried out on the eighth day after birth since the level of vitamin K is highest on this day and vitamin K plays a pivotal role in regulation and control of the important clotting factors in the coagulation pathway that helps in stopping bleeding.

A fact is that Muslims by doing the khitan, if done in following the commandment give to the forefather Ibrahim (pbuh), become part of the covenant between Allâh and Ibrahim (pbuh). Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was circumcised and as in all aspects of life he gave us a model to follow.

After Isma'eel (pbuh) was send away he disappear in the Torah to come briefly back at the funeral of his father Ibrahim (pbuh). And that is quite normal in a Jewish book about Jewish history.

Maybe you do not know but at the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him<sup>61</sup>) there where in Arabia people who were called hunafa (sing. Hanif). Those hanifiyyah where neither Jews nor Christians but followers of the monotheism of Ibrahim (pbuh) before the start of the preaching of Muhammad (pbuh). According to the Encyclopædia Britannica, "there is no evidence that a true hanif cult existed in pre-Islāmic Arabia".<sup>62</sup> However a Greek source from the fifth century CE, "The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen", speaks of how "Ibrahim had bequeathed a monotheist religion" to Arabs, that the Arabs descended "from Ishmael and Hagar" and followed Jewish practices such as not eating pork.<sup>63</sup> Sozomen was an historian of the Christian Church who is thought to have been a native of Gaza whose native tongue was Arabic and who lived from about 400 – 450 CE. Thus according to Ibn Rawandi, he provides a "reliable source" that Arabs -- at least in northwest Arabia -- were familiar with the idea there were pre-Islamic "Ibrahamic monotheists (hanifs) ... whether this was true of Arabs throughout the [Arabian] peninsula it is impossible to say".

A fact is that only the Arabs remembered and reenacted the Sacrifice of the son of Ibrahim (pbuh) even they mix it up with pagan elements. Later the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) purified the rituals form their pagan influence. A question comes to my mind: If Ishaq (pbuh) was the one who had to be sacrificed why should Arabs over the centuries commemorate this, why the Jews do not have a feast of commemoration of this event? Each year millions of pilgrims go to the holy city of Mecca to perform the Hajj that is completely in the sign of the exodus of Isma'eel (pbuh) to this valley with his mother Hajar.

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<sup>60</sup> Sahih Bukhari 7 779

<sup>61</sup> This expression follows specifically after uttering the name of the Prophet Muhammad. صلى الله عليه وسلم şallā -llāhu 'alayhī wa-'ālihī wa-sallam – abbreviation: PBBUH

<sup>62</sup> Hanif - britannica.com. Retrieved 23 February 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Rawandi, "Origins of Islam", 2000 - pg. 112

Also, it is a miracle that after all those centuries the Arabs remember their ancestor Isma'eel (pbuh). And it is also a miracle that many nations have disappeared as such as the Vikings, the Celts, and others, but the offspring of Ibrahim (pbuh) be it Jews or Arabs are still there knowing their history and ancestry. In modern times they exist as nations. This is unique and a proof that the words of Allâh to Ibrahim (pbuh), that out of him great nations will come forth, are true until today. Alhamdulillah<sup>64</sup>

Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 17:9-14 "Allâh said further to Ibrahim: "As for you, you are to keep my covenant, you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant between me and you, that you and your offspring after you will keep: Every male among you must get circumcised. 11 You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it will serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 Throughout your generations, every male among you eight days old must be circumcised, anyone who is born in the house and anyone who is not one of your offspring and who was purchased with money from a foreigner. 13 Every man born in your house and every man purchased with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant in your flesh must serve as a lasting covenant. 14 If any uncircumcised male will not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person must be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant. ... 23 Ibrahim then took Ish'ma-el his son and all the men born in his house and everyone he had purchased with money, every male in the household of Ibrahim, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins on that very day, just as Allâh had spoken with him. 24 Ibrahim was 99 years old when he had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised. 25 And Ish'ma-el his son was 13 years old when he had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised. 26 On that very day, Ibrahim was circumcised and also his son Ish'ma-el. 27 All the men of his household, anyone born in the house and anyone purchased with money from a foreigner, were also circumcised with him."

The verse 15-22 here I omitted speaks about Ishaq (pbuh)<sup>65</sup>. They are odd – as if they were there to remind the Jewish reader that all this is only about Ishaq (pbuh). But if you read as here above it is clear that Isma'eel (pbuh) as offspring of Ibrahim (pbuh) was circumcised as a sign of the covenant between Allâh and Ibrahim (pbuh).

The point is that Isma'eel (pbuh) was circumcised as was ordained by Allâh, at the same day as his father Ibrahim (pbuh). Automatically Isma'eel (pbuh) became part of that covenant. Saying otherwise is intellectual nonsense.

The theological implications of the promise in Genesis 17, however, are far-reaching. As Westermann writes: 'The promise concerning Ishmael means that the effect of Allâh's blessing extends beyond Israel to other nations as well. That universal trait which appeared in Ge. 1 and 10 continues here. Even though the covenant is carried on only Ishaq, that does not mean that Allâh no longer acts in regard to nations outside Israel; he blesses, increases, and grants greatness to them too. Ibrahim the is father, not only

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<sup>64</sup> Hallelujah – Glory to JHWH

<sup>65</sup> Genesis 17: 15-21 Then Allâh said to Ibrahim: "As for your wife Sar'ai, you must not call her Sar'ai, because Sarah will become her name. 16 I will bless her and also give you a son by her; I will bless her and she will become nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 At this Ibrahim fell facedown and began to laugh and to say in his heart: "Will a man 100 years old have a child born to him, and will Sarah, a woman 90 years old, give birth?" 18 So Ibrahim said to the true Allâh: "O that Ish'ma-el might live before you!" 19 To this Allâh said: "Your wife Sarah will definitely bear you a son, and you must name him Ishaq. And I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant to his offspring after him. 20 But as regards Ish'ma-el, I have heard you. Look! I will bless him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him very, very much. He will produce 12 chieftains, and I will make him become a great nation. 21 However, I will establish my covenant with Ishaq, whom Sarah will bear to you at this appointed time next year. 22 When Allâh finished speaking with him, he went up from Ibrahim."

the father of the people of Israel, but father in a broader sense, so that Ishmael, the tribal ancestor of the Ishmaelite people, remains Ibrahim's son with not the least diminution. We have here a truly wide-sweeping historical outlook: the Allâh of Israel has to do not only with Israel, but also with other nations; Allâh's blessing is not confined to the borders of Israel.'

Despite this, there is here an inherent paradox in Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 17. Isma'eel (pbuh) is excluded (v. 21), yet on the other, he is included when Ibrahim (pbuh) circumcised him (v. 23). Isma'eel (pbuh) is not only placed under the auspices of the Allâh of Israel, but he is also a member of Ibrahim's family, indeed, his firstborn. Therein lies the friction. Isma'eel (pbuh) and his descendants are relegated to the margin in the Biblical narrative, a most tenuous position that generates ambiguous portrayals at best and engenders hostile and negative depictions of them in postbiblical literature at worst.

We could have the impression while reading Safar al-Takwin (Genesis) 17, that the covenant was just circumcision. That would be odd because other nations also knew circumcision as well.

The covenant was about exclusively worshipping the only true Allâh, Creator of the universe. In Hebrew, they say Eloha (the God), in Arabic Allâh (the God).<sup>66</sup> Isma'eel (pbuh) when circumcised as part of this contract and when he was an adult his father Ibrahim (pbuh) visited him to build a house for Allâh in what was later known as Mecca. (We Covenanted with Ibrahim and Isma'il, that they should sanctify My House for those who circle around it, or use it as a retreat, or bow down, or prostrate themselves." Quran – Al-Baqarah (2):125)

This is not so strange. Let's go to the modern village of Beitin. It is a Palestinian town near RamAllâh, some 17 km from Al-Qods (Jerusalem). When Ibrahim (pbuh) entered Canaan, he stopped at Shechem and moved South "to the mountainous region to the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east."<sup>67</sup> Later when he came back from Egypt he pitched his tent on the East of Bethel, in the company of his nephew Lut (Lot). It is suggested that the site of his encampment was at Burj Beitin. From this place Allâh invited Ibrahim (pbuh) to view the land in all directions, assuring him that it would be for an inheritance to him and his offspring.<sup>68</sup> Bethel means house of Allâh, (Beth: house and El: Allâh in Hebr.)

Afterwards, on this place – House of Allâh / Bethel –Yakub (Jacob – pbuh) built an altar. Later in al-Qods (Jerusalem) King Suleman (Salomo – pbuh) built a House of Allâh<sup>69</sup> or Tempel.

So, in the period of the Patriarchs, the concept of a House of Allâh – as name or place of worship (altar) was not strange. Therefore it is not so odd that Ibrahim (pbuh) built with his oldest son Isma'eel (pbuh) a house of Allâh to establish the true end only religion in the Arabic peninsula that was part of the greater space Allâh promised to Ibrahim (pbuh) and his offspring.

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<sup>66</sup> Allâh is not another deity as some western Christians try to convince but is the Arabic for the Allâh of Ibrahim (pbuh). Christians from the Middle East use the name Allâh freely, without any bad assumption.

<sup>67</sup> Genesis 12:8

<sup>68</sup> Genesis 13:14, 15 "JHWH said to A'bram, after Lot had separated from him: "Raise your eyes, please, and look from the place where you are, to the north and south, east and west, 15 because all the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring as a lasting possession."

<sup>69</sup> The expression House of Allâh is also used in the Bible: 1 Chronicles 6:48 "Their brothers the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle, the house of the true Allâh."

Later this house of the true Allâh was a place where other Allâhs were worshipped too. Sometimes adversaries of Islam want you to believe that the Ka'bah or House of Allâh in Mecca was only a Temple of idols. Nothing is further from the truth. The Qur'an teaches us that the Meccans worshipped other deities beside Allâh. Their sin was association of false gods and goddesses to the only true Allâh that they know as Allâh, the Allâh of Ibrahim (pbuh) their forefather.

As I already said when Muhammad (pbuh) was called to his mission, preaching pure Monotheism, there was a remnant of other Monotheists in the Arabic peninsula. His message was not new, but as stated in the Qur'an – it was the first time Allâh spoke to the Isma'elites in their clear Arabic language and a prophet from their ranks.

After Muhammad's death the message of pure Monotheism spread over a vast part of the earth and many put their idols away to worship the only true Allâh of Ibrahim (pbuh), his forefather through Isma'eel (pbuh). The Arabs became a great nation and not only their beliefs spread over the earth but also their language and culture. From South-France at a moment until East-Asia. Now at this time you cannot find a country without Muslims. Many turn their back to the idols of our time and worship the only true Allâh of Ibrahim (pbuh).

What seems as a curse in the beginning, for Isma'eel (pbuh), is now a blessing for humanity.<sup>70</sup>

When we as Muslims reenact the sacrifice that Ibrahim (pbuh) did, we connect ourselves to that dramatic moment and as Islam and Muslim means submission to Allâh, as Ibrahim (pbuh) submitted himself to the will of Allâh and so did his son and so do we.

May the peace and love of our Master, Lord and Creator, the Merciful be with you – if you submit yourself to Him as did Ibrahim (pbuh) and his sons Isma'eel and Ishaq (pbuh).

And about all what is written in this paper – Allâh knows best.

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<sup>70</sup> Some may argue that just after Isma'eel (pbuh) his sons quickly became idol worshippers. We have no idea after how many generations this took place. But this doesn't change the promise Allâh did to Ibrahim (pbuh) that his offspring – his two sons and their offspring will be blessed until end of times. Don't forget that the Israelites when they lived in Egypt after the death of Yusuf (Joseph – pbuh) as a majority worshipped false Allâhs (Calf worship). It is only after they came through the Red Sea that they returned to the true worship of JHWH. Exodus 14:29-31 'But the Israelites walked on dry ground in the midst of the seabed, and the waters formed a wall on their right hand and on their left. 30 Thus JHWH saved Israel on that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel also saw the great power [hand] that JHWH wielded against the Egyptians, and the people began to fear JHWH and to put faith in JHWH and in his servant Moses.' Later Allâh gave the Ten Commandments, at the Mount Sinai in Arabia (Galatians 4:25) beginning: "I am JHWH your Allâh, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You must not have any other Allâhs besides me." (Exodus 20:2)