

***Eid-ul-Adzha*¹ and Bridging Prophet Abraham² (*as*) to Islam**

Bridging Prophet Abraham (*as*) to Islam comes at two historical elevations.³ The first elevation is his actual existence on earth as a distinguished prophet of Allah. Allah has justifiably, sent His 124,000 prophets⁴ to every nation in the world as His messengers. No nation has been deprived of a prophet since creation. The Holy Qur'an makes this point positively clear at **16:36** as, "*And certainly We⁵ raised in every nation a messenger, saying: Serve Allah and shun the devil. Then of them was he whom Allah guided, and of them was he whose remaining in error was justly due. So travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejecters.*" All prophets have preached the acceptance and fearing of One God only. This statement has been counter-balanced in the Holy Qur'an at **16:51** as "*And Allah has said: Take not two gods. He is only one God: So Me alone should you fear.*"

During the lifetime of Prophet Abraham (*as*), both paganism and various forms of idolatry were widespread throughout the world. Prophet Abraham (*as*) was the pioneering champion of the fundamental principle of belief in One God (Allah) only. Obedience to Allah as One God only, came to test in the early days of his life in the city of Ur (in Iraq⁶) when the young Abraham⁷ personally destroyed 364⁸ idols in the pagans' temple, and then left the largest idol standing intact with the axe

¹ Eid-ul-Adzha (there are spelling and pronunciation variations in different geographical communities) is an Arabic expression and which means a "solemn festival of sacrifice." Eid-ul-Adzha is an event held 2 lunar months and 10 days after the month of Ramadan and actually falls on the 10th of the Arabic month Dhil-Hijja, as an essential and integral event in the performance of pilgrimage (Hajj); but Eid-ul-Adzha must still be celebrated by all Muslims regardless whether or not they are able to go to Hajj. The event is based on lunar calendar and consequently advances by 11-12 days each year over the Gregorian calendar. The sacrifice aspect is essential and directly linked in memory of Prophet Abraham (*as*) who was tested when ordered by Allah to sacrifice his first-born and only son, Ishmael.

² The birth name of Prophet Abraham (*as*) was Abram. According to the Jewish scriptures, Abram was born in the city of Ur (in what is today Iraq) and he was the 10th descendant from the line of Shem, son of Noah. Later through Divine interception, his name was changed to Abraham. Abraham means the "father of the multitude" and some others put its meaning as the "father of humanity." Prophet Abraham (*as*) lived to age of 175 years. There is some difference in historical references. The Bible describes Prophet Abraham's (*as*) ancestor as Terah (Genesis 11:27-11.32) whereas the Holy Qur'an (6:75) describes his ancestor as his sire called Azar. Notwithstanding this difference, all three mainstream Faiths (Jews, Christians and Muslims) agree that Prophet Abraham (*as*) had two wives. Sarah as his first wife and Hagar as his second wife; and he fathered a son from each (first child was Ishmael from second wife Hagar and later second child Isaac from first wife Sarah). This clarification is necessary before discussion on the aspect of sacrifice of his first-born son. Although the Hindus most strongly distance themselves from the Semitic origins, their historic pioneer Brahma also had two wives; and he fathered a son from each (Athrava, the first son from Parwati his second wife and Angiras, the second son from Saraswati his first wife). Brahma fathered his children in advanced age and also lived 175 years. Brahma is called "Prajapati" meaning the father of humanity.

³ The elevations are dealing with what made Prophet Abraham (*as*) the father of humanity and significant recognitions are given to him amongst Jews, Christians and Muslims. In the Holy Qur'an, Prophet Abraham (*as*) has been mentioned 63 times by name and numerous other references collectively.

⁴ Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) statement in Hadith No 21257 in *Musnad Ibn Hanbal* establishes that there were over 124,000 prophets since creation.

⁵ "We" is Royal plural meaning One God only and must never be taken to mean more than One God. The Royal plural is used signifying One God as He is the Ruler of His Kingdom. Similarly, the Royal plural "Our" is also used.

⁶ Ur was an ancient Sumerian city in south east Iraq, it was also the birthplace of Prophet Abraham (*as*).

⁷ Abraham was a very young man, not yet married then, and not yet proclaimed as a prophet before he fled Ur.

⁸ There were 365 idols, one for each day of the year; 364 smaller idols and one very large as the "chief of idols."

leaning against it, as the pagans' eye-witness against himself⁹ (Abraham). The Holy Qur'an states about young Abraham's deliberate action at **21:57**, as *"And, by Allah! I will certainly plan against your idols after you go away, turning your backs."* When the people of Ur found out about young Abraham's bold actions, they convened a religious council and the council condemned Abraham to death, by casting him in a very large ring of fire. The fire, which had been especially prepared and raged for several days prior¹⁰ to the event, was intensely hot. Allah miraculously protected Abraham so that he remained unscathed and this is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **21:68-71** *"They said: Burn him, and help your gods, if you are going to do (anything). 69. We said: O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham: 70. And they intended a plan against him, but We made them the greater losers. 71. And We delivered him and Lot¹¹ (directing them) to the land which We had blessed for the nations."*

Allah is the Supreme Power and the Maker of all laws of nature and when Allah orders something to happen contrary to normal, Allah only orders and the event happens immediately to His order. The Holy Qur'an makes this very clear at **16:40**, as *"Our word for a thing, when We intend it, is only that We say to it, Be; and it is."* Hence when Allah ordered the fire to be cool and peace for Abraham, the fire lost all its fiercest heat and became a protective façade, concealing Prophet Abraham (as) within.

The apex to the first elevation includes the unparallel obedience of Prophet Abraham (as) to Allah, when Prophet Abraham (as) agreed and proceeded, ready to sacrifice his only son¹² Ishmael. This first elevation is a historical composite package of milestone sacrifices, as three sacrifices in a single episode (3-in-one sacrifice). The first-part of this package of 3-in-one sacrifices was the divinely inspired vision, which Prophet Abraham (as) experienced and in which, he was ordered by Allah to sacrifice his first born and only son, Ishmael. After Ishmael was notified of the vision, which his father Prophet Abraham (as) had experienced and then narrated to him, Ishmael voluntarily agreed to lie down on the stone altar and to be sacrificed by process of slaughter. The Holy Qur'an provides proof of this episode at **37:102**, as *"But when he became of age to work with him, he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee: so consider what thou seest. He said: O my father, do as thou art commanded; if Allah please, thou wilt find me patient."* This voluntary agreement by Ishmael therefore became the second-part of the package of 3-in-one sacrifice.

The third-part of the package of 3-in-one sacrifice was the consequential immediate cessation of human sacrifice¹³, when Allah was satisfied with the sincerity shown by Prophet Abraham (as) and Allah ordered that the young boy Ishmael gets spared immediately; and substituted him with an

⁹ Abraham's sire was a pagan chief high priest and worshipper of idols. He had left for Syria to purchase more idols and left Abraham as a security guard to take care and full charge of the temple, full of idols.

¹⁰ The fire in a ring format had raged for several days and was so intensely hot that nobody could get close to it. The idol worshipping community then constructed a catapult to throw Abraham into the fire from a safe distance, but Allah protected Abraham and prevented him from becoming burnt to death.

¹¹ Prophet Abraham (as) was uncle to Prophet Lot (as). Terah had three sons (Bible: Genesis 11:27-11.32). They were Abraham, Nahor and Haran. Haran was the father of Prophet Lot (as).

¹² That order from Allah to Prophet Abraham (as) was demonstrated exemplary Divine Order to cease the old practice of human sacrifice. The old practice of human sacrifice, in a nutshell, was the ultimate sacrifice parents made to their gods (note: not Allah), when their first-born child was a son. The first-born son was slaughtered at an altar, and his blood was placed in a precious-metal capsule with burning incense, and then offered to the gods over the child's dead body. The purpose of the incense was to suppress the smell of burning human blood. Hence when the Divine Order came from Allah to Prophet Abraham (as) to cease in proceeding to slaughter his son Ishmael, and instead to select a healthy fattened lamb from his flock for sacrificing, that event became the end of human sacrifice amongst the civilised communities.

¹³ Please read footnote 12.

animal sacrifice (a fattened lamb) by same process of slaughter. So great was this historical episode of the 3-in-one sacrifice, that the event of animal sacrifice became a prescribed ritual in the annual Hajj to Mecca. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **37:107** as *"And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice."* However, it is not the prescribed killing of an animal, which matters but the sincerity and the remembrances of Prophet Abraham (as) and his son Ishmael and willingness to conform to the Order from Allah. This point is clarified in the Holy Qur'an at **22:37** as *"Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches Allah, but to Him is acceptable observance of duty on your part. Thus has He made them subservient to you, that you may magnify Allah for guiding you aright. And give good news to those who do good (to others)."*

Rolling back into the history of Prophet Abraham (as) and some of the prominent events already highlighted, the Holy Qur'an refers to him as a role model and these have been clearly encapsulated at the following quotations: **16:120** *"Surely Abraham was a model (of virtue), obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists,"* **16:121** *"Grateful for His favours. He chose him and guided him on the right path."* **16:122** *"And We gave him good in this world; and in the Hereafter he is surely among the righteous."* **16:123** *"Then We revealed to thee: Follow the faith of Abraham, the upright one; and he was not of the polytheists."*

The second elevation is the alignment of Prophet Abraham (as) and his admission directly into Islam, during the historical event of *Miraj-un-Nabi*, when all the past prophets stood in lines (*saff*) and performed the Muslim prayers in the *Sidrat-ul Muntaha*¹⁴; and with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as their *Imam*. All the past prophets were thereon admitted into Islam. It should be noted by the reader, that at that point in time the Holy Qur'an was still being revealed in delivery-batches; and the name of the religion of Islam was just being introduced.

These two historical elevations are now explained in sequential relays in the subsequent paragraphs, as bridging the gap between Prophet Abraham (as) and Islam, the final religion of choice, which was directly and prescriptively proclaimed by Allah, as detailed in the Holy Qur'an at the following: **3:19** *"Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Book differed only after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the messages of Allah — Allah indeed is Quick at reckoning."* **3:85** *"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers."* **5:3** *"Forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, and the strangled (animal), and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall, and that killed by goring with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten — except what you slaughter; and that which is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols), and that you seek to divide by arrows; that is a transgression. This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me. This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion. But whoever is compelled by hunger, not inclining wilfully to sin, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."*

The combined information of historical events in chronological sequences has been encapsulated in the three mainstreams of Faiths. They range from the Jewish scripture (the Tanakh), the Christian

¹⁴ *Sidrat-ul Muntaha* is a metaphorical expression referring to the highest pedestal in Heaven, as a shady place beyond human imagination and even beyond the accessibility of all angels (Holy Qur'an 83:18).

scripture (mainly the first five books of the Old Testament of the Bible), and the Muslim scripture (the Holy Qur'an).

Historians conclude that the wide gap between the life of Prophet Abraham (as) and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) spans in the approximate range 2400-2500 years. Specific mentions of Prophet Abraham (as) in those three Faiths' scriptures have very strong commonality. They are referred to as Semitic religions' scriptures and some also refer to them into the three mainstream religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam collectively as "Abrahamic religions."¹⁵ Prophet Abraham (as) had two sons¹⁶, Ishmael was the elder by 12 years. Ishmael brought about the Arab communities as his descendants; and from whom this world's humanity had Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the only Ishmaelite prophet and the Seal or the Final of all Prophets¹⁷.

Allah in His infinite wisdom and planning ensured that all communities of people were graced with prophets¹⁸, prior to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at 35:24, as "*Surely We have sent thee with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.*"

The younger son Isaac, brought about the Hebrew prophets¹⁹ from his descendants; and from whose lineage, humanity had Jesus Christ (as) as the final Israelite prophet. Prophet Abraham (as) is always regarded and respected as the father of humanity²⁰ and specific mention is also made in the Hindu scripture, where his name has been given as *Brahma*. It is also widely accepted that Hinduism does not fall within the collective classifications of Semitic or Abrahamic religions, largely because of the Hindus' own rejection of that historic classification. Hence this facet will not be discussed further in this document, except the passing reference in Footnote No 1 at page 1.

¹⁵ The main Jewish scripture is the Tanakh, which is intact from the original revelations and comprises both the Law and the writings. The books of Tanakh (Tanakh is actually an acronym) are: *Torah, Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*. The Torah is the original sacred texts of Judaism, which is read out in the Synagogue. The Tanakh is the highest texts of written authority for Jews and also makes up the first five books of the Old Testament, which are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Hebrew names of these five books are: *Bereshith, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar* and *Devarim*. It should be noted that there is no direct equivalents of Chapter and verse combinations between the Tanakh and the Old Testament of the Bible. Other parts of the New Testament include much of the material derived from the Tanakh. The main Christian scripture set was *Injeel, Zabur* and *Tawrat*, which later became the Bible after incorporating the four Gospels. The entire Bible has been re-edited and modified several times, over the last few centuries. The main scripture and the principle laws of Islam is the Holy Qur'an, which is intact in its original revelations 1500 years ago, and is marvellously grouped into 114 Chapters.

¹⁶ Prophet Abraham (as) was at ripe age of 84-85 years when his first son Ishmael was born.

¹⁷ The Seal or Final Prophet means that after the death of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), there will never be emergence of any other prophet of any description (*Nabi* and *Rasul*) till the Last Day (end of the world) and this has been evidenced in the Holy Qur'an at 33:40 as, "*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.*"

¹⁸ Prior to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the Final Prophet, there were 124,000+ prophets (*Nabi*) and out of whom 315 were Messengers (*Rasul*). This is reported in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad Hanbal (ra) as Hadith No 21257. (A Musnad is a third-party sworn-reporting of a fact which links to the actual fact with proofs). These were other than the 56 Israelite prophets. There is not a community, which was not graced with a prophet.

¹⁹ There were 56 Israelite prophets, with Jesus Christ (as) as the last in the line of Israelites. Islam names only 24 distinct Israelites as prophets in the Holy Qur'an, descending from the line of Isaac.

²⁰ The world's leading tribes in existence during the life of Prophet Abraham include Ishmaelite, Israelite, Medianite and Edomite.

Notwithstanding that billions of people throughout the world look different, have different skin and hair colours, have different cultures and speak different languages, mankind is a single nation, because their souls are of the same specification – in pure spirit, as gift of life from Allah. The Holy Qur’an most proudly bears this proof at **2:213** as, *“Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people concerning that in which they differed. And none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, envying one another. So Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path.”*

Prophet Abraham (*as*) was a Muslim although not an Arab. This apparent contradiction needs explaining, as all other Israelite prophets were also Muslims, whilst they were all descending from the same Israelite mainstream. All past prophets as Messengers of Allah were also Muslims. The obvious question which rises is, and then who is a Muslim (an Arabic word)? By definition, a Muslim is a person who submits to the will of Allah and at the same time not associating in worship to any other form of object (such as idols), or spiritual focus on anything, other than Allah.

The above definition has been the cornerstone in preaching by all prophets (*Nabi* and *Rasul*) and their preaching cornerstone was given that immaculate finish, in documented proof, when the Holy Qur’an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The next obvious question which rises is, and then who all fall within the perimeter of Islam (an Arabic word)? Again by definition, any adherent of Islam is a Muslim. All persons who accept and practice the five pillars²¹ of Islam and accept the Holy Qur’an as the final revealed scripture²², which was authored by Allah; and accept Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the Seal and the Final Prophet of Allah (*Nabi* and *Rasul*), fall within the glorious perimeter of Islam.

It is very important to bridge the gap between Prophet Abraham (*as*) and Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) and both of which, also bridge over to Islam, that the involvement of animal sacrifice in Hajj and the continued animal sacrifice (and other than Hajj), shall forever be remembered as Muslim events. The sacrifice by Prophet Abraham (*as*) should not be very mistakenly isolated as a historic event only, notwithstanding that Prophet Abraham (*as*) was a Sumerian²³.

The significance of Eid-ul-Adzha must not be limited to just practical slaughter of an animal and distribution of the meat; but that event’s origins back to Prophet Abraham (*as*) and the historical and spiritual aspects, which reflect his purity and championing the belief in One God (Allah) and of course, his obedience to all commands from Allah.

It is for all correct thinking Muslims to guide and assist other Muslims; and the Holy Qur’an has sanctioned that correct advice shall be given to those who need to be guided. This is given in the Holy Qur’an at **3:103**, as *“And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.”*

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²¹ The Five Pillars of Islam are: 1st: Shahada (belief in One Allah only); 2nd Daily Prayers (five times daily); 3rd Alms-giving (charity and zakat); 4th Fasting (in month of Ramadan) and 5th Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

²² The Holy Qur’an, which is an absolute marvel from Allah and authored by Allah, shall never be superseded by any other scripture. This shall be so till the end of the world.

²³ Please refer to Footnote 6.