

Islamic Hagar and Her Family

The deepest truths and insights that lie at the heart of each major religious tradition are represented by myths and symbols that are able to inform, form, and transform the inner and outer lives of millions of human beings through the ages. By commemorating such myths and symbols we celebrate the pivotal role they have played in our individual and communal lives in the past. At the same time we reflect on ways in which they may be relevant to our lives in the present and the future. In this essay I would like to honor one of my foremothers, Hagar (*Hajira* in Arabic), whose role in Islam's "Abrahamic" narrative is not known to many outsiders. The narrative in which she appears contains five characters: two wives, their common husband, and two sons. They are Hagar and Sarah, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac. Their story in the Islamic tradition is of central significance as narrated in the Qur'an and in the hadith (oral traditions of the Prophet Muhammad).¹

Hagar and Sarah are important not only by virtue of their role in the story of the Prophet Abraham, but also because of what they represent as women in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim patriarchal culture. Before reflecting on the latter aspect of their story, I will look at the "normative" Islamic view of Hagar and Sarah that emerges from a reading of the most authoritative sources of the Islamic tradition. Among these sources the most important is the Qur'an, which Muslims believe is

the Word of God, revealed through the Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad, who lived in Arabia in the seventh century. Next in authority to the Qur'an in Sunni Islam are the two hadith collections *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. They are believed to contain the most authentic traditions ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad.

SARAH IN THE TRADITIONS

The Qur'an does not mention either Hagar or Sarah by name. There is, however, one reference to Sarah (Surah 51: *Adh-Dhariyat*) in the story of Abraham's "honored guests." The relevant passage reads as follows:

When those (heavenly messengers) came unto him and bade him peace, he answered, "(And upon you be) peace!" (saying to himself,) "They are strangers." Then he turned quietly to his household, and brought forth a fat (roasted) calf, and placed it before them, saying, "Will ye not eat?" (And when he saw that the guests would not eat) he became apprehensive of them; (but) they said, "Fear not"—and gave him the glad tidings of (the birth of) a son who would be endowed with deep knowledge. Thereupon his wife approached (the guests) with a loud cry, and struck her face (in astonishment) and exclaimed: "A barren old woman (like me)!" They answered: "Thus has thy Sustainer decreed; and, verily, He alone is truly wise, all-knowing!" (verses 25–30)²

In addition to this reference to the Qur'an, Sarah figures significantly in two stories narrated by Bukhari and Muslim. In them Hagar is also mentioned. Bukhari's narrative states:

Narrated by Abu Hurairah: The Prophet said, the Prophet Abraham emigrated with Sarah and entered a village where there was a king or a tyrant. (The king) was told that Abraham had entered (the village) accompanied by a woman who was one of the most charming women. So, the king sent for Abraham and asked, "O Abraham! Who is the lady accompanying you?" Abraham replied, "She is my sister (i.e., in religion). Then Abraham returned to her and said, "Do not contradict my statement, for I have informed them that you are my sister. By Allah, there are no true believers on this land except you and I." Then Abraham sent her to the king. When the king got to her, she got up and performed ablution, prayed and said, "O Allah! If I have believed in You and Your Apostle, and have saved my private parts from everybody except my husband, then please do not let this pagan overpower me." On that the king fell in a mood of agitation and started moving his legs. Seeing the condition of the king, Sarah said, "O Allah! If he should die, people will say that I have killed him." The king regained his power, and proceeded toward her but she got up again and performed ablutions prayed and said, "O Allah! If I have believed in You and Your Apostle and have kept my private parts safe from all except my husband then please do not let this pagan overpower me." The king again fell in a mood of agitation and started moving his legs. On seeing that state of the king, Sarah said, "O Allah! If he

should die, the people will say that I have killed him." The king got either two or three attacks, and after recovering from the last attack he said, "By Allah! You have sent a saraṇ to me. Take her to Abraham," and gave her Ajar. (Hagar). So she came back to Abraham and said, "Allah humiliated the pagan and gave us a slave-girl for service."³

A different version of the story is given by Muslim:

Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: "Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) never told a lie but only thrice: two times for the sake of Allah (for example, his words): 'I am sick,' and his words: 'But it was the big one amongst them which had done that' and because of Sarah (his wife). He had come in a land inhabited by haughty and cruel men along with Sarah. She was very good-looking amongst the people, so he said to her: 'If these were to know that you are my wife they would snatch you away from me, so if they ask you tell them that you are my sister and, in fact, you are my sister in Islam, and I do not know of any other Muslim in this land besides I and you.' And when they entered that land the tyrants came to see her and said to him (the king): 'There comes to your land a woman, when you alone deserve to possess,' so he (the king) sent someone (towards her) and she was brought and Ibrahim (peace be upon him) stood in prayer, and when she visited him (the tyrant king came) he could not help but stretch his hand towards her and his hand was tied up. He said: 'Supplicate Allah so that He may release my hand and I will do no harm to you.' She did that and the man repeated (the same highhandedness) and his hand was again tied up more tightly than on the first occasion and he said to her like that and she again did that (supplicated), but he repeated (the same highhandedness) and his hands were tied up more tightly than on the previous occasion. He then again said: 'Supplicate your Lord so that He may set my hand free; by Allah I shall do no harm to you.' She did and his hand was freed. Then he called the person who had brought her and said to him: 'You have brought to me the saraṇ and you have not brought to me a human being, so turn them out from my land,' and he gave Hajira as a gift to her. She returned (along with Hajira) and when Ibrahim (peace be upon him) saw her, he said: 'How have you returned?' she said, 'With full safety (have I returned). Allah held the rein of that debauch and he gave me a maid-servant.'" Abu Hurairah said: "O sons of the rain of the sky, she is your mother."⁴

In both versions of the story given above, Sarah is able to protect her chastity by means of her personal piety and faith in the face of a tyrannical king and a society that placed little value on the lives of strangers, particularly women. While Abraham felt compelled to abandon her when confronted by the superior might of those who wished to take his wife/sister from him, Sarah did not allow herself to become a sacrificial victim. She prayed for divine intervention, confident that her faithfulness to God and to her husband rendered her worthy of being saved from the adulterous designs of the king who held her captive. That God responded to her prayers in both binding and releasing the hand of the aggressor showed that there was a direct relationship between Sarah and her Creator-Sustainer. Placed in a situation of great jeopardy, she returns not only without

being molested, but also with a gift, that of Hagar, who, in turn, was to become the pioneer of a new civilization.

HAGAR IN THE TRADITIONS

The story of Hagar, not mentioned in the Qur'an, is given in considerable detail in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*. It appears in a number of overlapping traditions in the hadith, book 15: 9, called *The Anbiya* (Prophets). Number 583 mentions many significant features of the Hagar story as Muslims know it. Its earlier part (which refers to the death of "Ishmael's mother") reads as follows:

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: "The first lady to use a girdle was the mother of Ishmael. She used a girdle so that she might hide her tracks from Sarah.⁵ Abraham brought her and her son Ishmael while she was suckling him, to a place near the Ka'bah under a tree on the spot of Zam-zam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water. So he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying, 'O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?' She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, 'Has Allah ordered you to do so?' He said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Then He will not neglect us,' and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards, and on reaching Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'bah, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayers: 'O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House (Ka'bah at Mecca) in order, O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks.'" (Surah 14: *Ibrahim*, 37)

Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at him (Ishmael) tossing in agony; she left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found that the mountain of Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from the Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times. The Prophet said, "This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (i.e., Safa and Marwa).

When she reached the Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, 'O, (whoever you may be!) You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?' And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zam-zam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), till water flowed

from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hands in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it." The Prophet added, "May Allah bestow Mercy on Ishmael's mother! Had she let the Zam-zam (flow without trying to control it) (or had she not scooped from that water) (to fill her water-skin), Zam-zam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." The Prophet further added, "Then she drank (water) and suckled her child. The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid of being neglected, for this is the House of Allah which will be built by this boy and his father, and Allah never neglects His people.'

The house (i.e., Ka'bah) at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock, and when torrents came, they flowed to its right and left. She lived in that way till some people from the tribe of Jurhum passed by her and her child, as they (i.e., the Jurhum people) were coming through the way of Kada. They landed in the lower part of Mecca where they saw a bird that had the habit of flying around water and not leaving it. They said, 'This bird must be flying around water, though we know that there is no water in this valley. They sent one or two messengers who discovered the source of water. So they all came (towards the water).'

The Prophet added, "Ishmael's mother was sitting near the water. They asked her, 'Do you allow us to stay with you?' She replied, 'Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water.' They agreed to do that." The Prophet further said, "Ishmael's mother was pleased with the whole situation as she used to love to enjoy the company of the people. So, they settled there, and later on they sent for their families who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there. The child (i.e., Ishmael) grew up and learned Arabic from them and (his virtues) caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman from amongst them. After Ishmael's mother had died, Abraham came after Ishmael's marriage in order to see his family that he had left before, but he did not find Ishmael there. . . ."⁶

INTERPRETING THE TRADITIONS

Although it may be inferred from the hadith cited above that Sarah did not look kindly upon Hagar, who was fearful of her, it is clear that Abraham's decision to leave Hagar and Ishmael in the desert (believed by Muslims to be in the vicinity of Mecca) was not based on his desire to appease his first wife. Abraham, while not disclosing to Hagar why he was leaving her and her infant son in the wilderness, does respond in the affirmative to her question whether God had commanded him to do so. Abraham's prayer, said when he is out of Hagar's sight, shows that he believes that in order to fulfill the prophetic mission of building the Sacred House of God (which Muslims believe to be the first House of God at Mecca) it was necessary to leave a part of his family in the uninhabited, uncultivated land. His prayer further indicates his faith that this uninhabited, uncultivated land will become populated and fruitful and that God will ensure that those whom he is leaving behind will find sustenance and love in their new environment.

While the biblical narrative in Genesis 21:8–14 tends to leave readers with the impression that Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away in order to placate the jealous wrath of Sarah and had nothing more, henceforward, to do with them, the story as told in *Sahih Al-Bukhari* shows that Abraham had a continuing relationship with that part of his family. Muslims believe that Abraham returned periodically to visit Hagar and Ishmael. In the hadith cited earlier, mention is made of a visit to Ishmael's family after the death of "Ishmael's mother."⁷ That not only Hagar but also Sarah accepted what Abraham believed to be God's plan for his offspring is brought out in hadith 584, which is a variant of hadith 583.⁸ This hadith states that each time Abraham thought of visiting Ishmael, he informed Sarah of his intentions. The figure of Hagar that emerges from the traditions narrated in *Sahih Al-Bukhari* is that of a woman of exceptional faith, love, fortitude, resolution, and strength of character. Once she hears from Abraham that God commands her and her infant son to be left in the desert, she shows no hesitation whatever in accepting her extremely difficult situation. She does not wail or rage or beg Abraham not to abandon her and Ishmael. Instead, surrendering spontaneously and totally to what she believes to be God's will, she says that she is "satisfied to be with Allah," who will never neglect her. She lets Abraham go, without any words of recrimination or sorrow, and returns to her infant son.

With a small supply of food and water, Hagar's major concern is to increase her milk-flow so that she can feed her child adequately. Once out of water she knows that both their lives are imperiled. Unable to endure the sight of her baby son writhing in agony due to dehydration, she undertakes a massive search for help. Running frantically between Safa and Marwa she searches desperately for some sign of hope. Her refusal to give up, to keep running and looking and praying for help demonstrates her determination to fight for her beloved child's life to the last drop of her own strength. Finally, her faith and effort are rewarded and Archangel Gabriel appears to guide her to the spring Zam-zam (whose waters are believed by Muslims to have medicinal or miraculous powers). Through Zam-zam, Hagar is able not only to save her own and Ishmael's life, but also to attract the people of the tribe of Jurhum into becoming her companions and partners in creating a prosperous settlement⁹ (154). She raises her son to become a God-conscious man, loved and admired for his many qualities, who becomes his father Abraham's chosen partner in building the first House of God in Mecca.

While Abraham is viewed by the Islamic tradition as the first "Muslim" or true believer in God, Hagar is viewed as the pioneer woman who led the way to the establishment of a new civilization. She is seen not only as "Ishmael's mother" but also as the mother of all Arabs and of those who later became the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, a descendant of the Prophet Ishmael. Hagar, a black slave-girl, rose from the lowliest of positions to the highest place of honor in the Islamic tradition. In Muslim societies the mother is the most highly revered member of the family because, following one of the most popular traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims widely believe that Paradise lies under the feet of the mother.

The dramatic story of Hagar's life shows that class or color is not a deterrent to any person who has faith in God and is resolutely righteous in action. So Hagar does not see herself as a victim of Abraham and Sarah, or of a patriarchal, class- and race-conscious culture. She is a victor who, with the help of God and her own initiative, is able to transform a wilderness into the cradle of a new world dedicated to the fulfillment of God's purpose on earth. Each year as millions of Muslim pilgrims run or walk between the points that symbolize Safa and Marwa, they pay homage to Hagar, who has become an indestructible emblem not only of a mother's love for her offspring but of a true believer's faith in the saving power of God. Hagar's shadow looms large over the valley where she once stood alone, and her spirit is as inextricably embodied in the Ka'bah as that of her husband Abraham and her son Ishmael.

Finally, Hagar is associated with the idea of "hijrah," or going into exile for the sake of God. While in the Jewish tradition the idea of the diaspora, or the dispersion of the Jewish people in alien lands, inspires feelings of sorrow and nostalgia for a return to homeland and community, according to the Qur'an, the state of hijrah is a blessed one. When one is in the wilderness, without the protection of any familiar framework or faces, one's faith in God and one self is put to a real test. Those who are willing to confront the challenge of hijrah, to leave their place of origin or sojourn in order to live in accordance with the will and pleasure of God, gain merit in the sight of God. Many passages in the Qur'an attest this understanding.¹⁰

The Prophet Muhammad, himself, becomes an exemplar of hijrah as he left his birthplace Mecca and chose to live in another city so that he could further his prophetic mission of establishing an Islamic society. In doing so he followed in the footsteps of his foremother Hagar who, generations earlier, had chosen to dwell in the desert to which God had directed her, making a home and community out of an unknown land and people. She demonstrated by her faith and actions that for a believer all of God's earth is a sanctified place and that loyalty to God supersedes attachment to terrestrial bonds, be they of place or persons.

ABRAHAM IN THE QUR'AN

Although Hagar's story is recounted in the hadith literature, the symbolic significance of Abraham is underscored in a number of Qur'anic passages. It is important to understand how special Abraham is to Muslims. Not only is he the Prophet most often mentioned in the Qur'an after the prophet Muhammad, but he is also the one who broke away from polytheism to become the first "Muslim." The Qur'an repeatedly describes Abraham as "hanif," or one who turns away from all that is not-God to submit to God's law and order¹¹ (556-557). The Islamic tradition sees Abraham as a unifying figure whom all three Abrahamic traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—can look back to and claim as their own. The prominence given to Abraham by the Qur'an and by the Islamic

tradition is evident throughout the most significant as well as the most spectacular social ritual of the Muslim world: the hajj or pilgrimage. The Qur'an portrays Abraham and his son Ishmael as builders of the Ka'bah and states that God had commanded Abraham to proclaim the first pilgrimage (Surah 21: *Al-Hajj*, 26–29). During the "Hajj," all pilgrims pray at the Station ("Maqam") of Abraham. Then there is commemoration and ritual enactment of the frantic search for water by Hagar as she ran seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa. The appearance of the Zam-zam is associated with the infant Ishmael beating the earth with his legs. The stoning of the devil and the sacrifice ceremony at the end of the hajj is also associated with Abraham.

According to numerous passages in the Qur'an, Abraham was one of God's chosen ones. He was blessed both in this world and in the hereafter:

And who, unless he be weak of mind, would want to abandon Abraham's creed, seeing that We have indeed raised him high in this world, and that, verily, in the life to come he shall be among the righteous? (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 130)

Verily, Abraham was a man who combined within himself all virtues, devoutly obeying God's will, turning away from all that is false, and not being of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God: (for he was always) grateful for the blessings granted by Him who had elected him and guided him onto a straightway. And so We vouchsafed him good in this world; and, verily, in the life to come (too) he shall find himself among the righteous. (Surah 16: *An-Nahl*, 120–122)

And (as for Abraham) We bestowed upon him Isaac and (Isaac's son) Jacob, and caused prophethood and revelation to continue among his offspring. And We vouchsafed him his reward in this world; and, verily, life to come (too) he shall find himself among the righteous. (Surah 29: *Al-Ankabut*, 27)

The Qur'an refers to Abraham as the friend of God:

And who could be of better faith than he who surrenders his whole being unto God and is a doer of good withal, and follows the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false—seeing that God exalted Abraham with His love? (Surah 4: *An-Nisa'*, 125)

Surah 37: *As-Saffat*, 83–84 points out that Abraham approached God with a heart and mind in total accord with the Will of the Creator. Further, the Qur'an states that God recognized and rewarded the faith of Abraham and his righteous progeny:

And call to mind Our servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, all of them endowed with inner strength and vision: for verily, We purified them by means of a thought most pure: the remembrance of the life to come. And, behold, in Our sight they were indeed the elect, the truly good! (Surah 38: *Sad*, 45–47)

In his poetry, Muhammad Iqbal—modern Islam's most outstanding poet-philosopher, frequently pictures Abraham as an iconoclast who is shown breaking his father's idols. The background to Iqbal's image is this qur'anic narrative:

And, indeed, long before (the time of Moses) We vouchsafed unto Abraham his consciousness of what is right; and We are aware of (what moved) him when he said unto his father and his people, "What are these images to which you are so intensely devoted?"

They answered: "We found our forefathers worshipping them."

Said he: "Indeed, you and your forefathers have obviously gone astray!"

They asked: "Hast thou come unto us (with this claim) in all earnest—or art thou one of those jesters?"

He answered: "Nay, but your true Sustainer is the Sustainer of the heaven and the earth—He who has brought them into being; and I am one of those who bear witness to this (truth)!"

And (he added to himself) "By God, I shall most certainly bring about the downfall of your idols as soon as you have turned your backs and gone away!"

And then he broke those (idols) to pieces, (all) save the biggest of them so that they might (be able to) turn to it.

(When they saw what had happened,) they said: "Who has done this to our gods? Verily, one of the worst wrongdoers is he!"

Said some (of them): "We heard a youth speak of these (gods with scorn): he is called Abraham."

(The others) said: "Then bring him before the people's eyes, so that they might bear witness (against him)!"

(And when he came,) they asked: "Hast thou done this to our gods, O Abraham?" He answered: "Nay, it was this one, the biggest of them, that did it: but ask them (yourselves)—provided they can speak!"

And so they turned upon one another, saying, "Behold, it is you who are doing wrong." (Surah 21: *Anbiya*, 51–64)

To Iqbal it is necessary to negate all that is not-God before God's existence can be affirmed. Negation is signified by the "la" in the phrase "la ilaha illa Allah" (there is no God but God) in the Islamic Shahadah or Confession of Faith. Iqbal's poetry captures the spirit of the qur'anic epithet *hanif*, which refers to one who believes in the One God, but also to a complete refusal to associate anything or anyone with God. Abraham is *hanif* precisely because he upheld the Oneness and Allness of God in the face of all opposition and obstacles. The following passages describe this belief.

And they say, "Be Jews"—or, "Christians"—"and you shall be on the right path." Say: "Nay, but (ours is) the creed of Abraham who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God." (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 135)

Say: "God has spoken the truth: follow, then, the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God." (Surah 3: *Al-Imran*, 95)

Say: Behold, my Sustainer has guided me onto a straight way through an ever-true faith—the way of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him." (Surah 6: *Al-An'am*, 161)

And lastly, We have inspired thee, (O Muhammad, with this message:) "Follow the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false, and was not one of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God." (Surah 16: *An-Nahl*, 123)

From the afore-cited Qur'anic passages it becomes evident that the prominence given to Abraham by the Islamic tradition is grounded in the very revelation upon which Islam is founded. But though the Qur'an stresses the point that Abraham was "neither a Jew nor a Christian" (thus a symbol of unity rather than division), it also repeats with force and clarity that Islam is a confirmation and a continuation of the message given by God to all the prophets before the time of Muhammad. The following passages underscore this point.

Say: "We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on High upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the (other) prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them." (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 136)

Step by step has He bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains (of earlier revelations): for it is He who has bestowed from on high the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as a guidance unto mankind. (Surah 3: *Al-Imran*, 3-4)

Say: "We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from On high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which Has been vouchsafed by their Sustainer unto Moses and Jesus and All the (other) prophets: we make no distinction between any of them." (Surah 3: *Al-Imran*, 84)

Behold, We have inspired thee (O Prophet) just as We inspired Noah and all the prophets after him—as We inspired Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac; and Jacob, and their descendants, including Jesus and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron, and Solomon; and as We vouchsafed unto David a book of divine wisdom; and as (We inspired other) apostles whom We have mentioned to thee ere this, as well as apostles whom We have not mentioned to thee; and as God spoke His word unto Moses." (Surah 4: *An-Nisa'*, 163)

In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Noah—and into which We gave thee (O Muhammad) insight through revelation—as well as that which We had enjoined upon Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus. (Surah 42: *Ash-Shura*, 13)

PRAYING TOWARD MECCA

In view of the linkage between Islam and the Hebrew prophets, it is hardly surprising that the early Muslims prayed facing Jerusalem, the "holy" city revered by both Jews and Christians. The hijrah (migration) of the Prophet and the Muslims occurred in 622 CE and was followed by years of conflict and bitterness between Muslims and Jews in Medina. In 624 CE, a Qur'anic revelation decreed that the direction of prayer be changed from Jerusalem to Mecca. A number of non-Muslim writers explain this change by saying that it was due to the growing tension between the Jews of Medina and Muhammad or that it was motivated by a desire to break away from the religious tie with the Jewish-Christian heritage and establish a national state. These explanations offend Muslims mainly because

the underlying implication is that the Qur'an is not the Word of God but the work of Muhammad, who at different times issued statements designed to meet different political needs or expediencies. From an Islamic standpoint any suggestion that Muhammad manipulated the revelation in any way is tantamount to casting doubt upon the authority of Islamic tradition in toto.

If one looks at the question of the change in Qibla (in the direction for prayer) from the point of view of a Muslim who accepts that the directive came not from Muhammad but from God, how is one to understand the reasons for and meaning of this change? An examination of the relevant qur'anic passage provides significant insights:

The weak-minded among people will say, "What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have hitherto observed?"

Say: "God's is the east and the west; He guides whom He wills onto a straight way."

And this have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that (with your lives) you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you.

And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed (for this community) the direction of prayer which thou (O Prophet) hast formerly observed: for indeed it was a hard test for all but those whom God has guided aright. But God will surely not lose sight of your faith—for, behold, God is most compassionate towards man, a dispenser of grace.

We have seen thee (O Prophet) often turn thy face towards heaven (for guidance): and now We shall indeed make thee turn in prayer in a direction which will fulfill thy desire. Turn, then, thy face towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your face towards it (in prayer).

And, verily, those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime know well that this (commandment) comes in truth from their Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what they do.

And yet, even if thou wert to place all evidence before those who have been vouchsafed earlier revelation, they would not follow thy direction of prayer; and neither mayest thou follow their direction of prayer, nor even do they follow one another's direction. And if thou shouldst follow their errant views after all the Knowledge that has come to thee, thou wouldst surely be among the evildoers.

They unto whom We have vouchsafed revelation aforetime know it as they know their own children: but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the Truth—the truth from thy Sustainer!

Be not, then, among the doubters: for, every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself: for verily, God has the power to will anything.

Thus, from wherever thou mayest come forth, turn thy face (in prayer) towards the Inviolable House of Worship—for, behold, this (commandment) comes in truth from thy Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what you do. Hence, from wherever thou mayest come forth, turn thy face (in prayer) towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may

be, turn your faces towards it, so that people should have no argument against you unless they are bent upon wrongdoing. And hold not them in awe, but stand in awe of Me, and (obey Me,) so that I might bestow upon you the full measure of My blessings, and that you might follow the right path.

Even as We have sent unto you an apostle from among yourselves to convey unto you Our messages, and to cause you to grow in purity, and to impart unto you revelation and wisdom. And to teach you that which you know not: so remember Me. And I shall remember you; and be grateful unto Me, and deny Me not. (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 142–152)

As pointed out earlier, “Qibla” may be understood as the direction in which Muslims turn their faces when they pray, and in this sense the aforementioned qur’anic passage decrees a change in Qibla commanding Muslims to turn in the direction of the Sacred Mosque when they pray. But “Qibla” also represents the focal point of the aspirations and ideals of the Islamic community and in this sense there was no change in Qibla, since the House of God built by Abraham who founded the “Din” of Islam was, from the first, the intended center and unifying symbol of the Muslim *ummah* (or community).

An idea that finds frequent expression in the Qur’an is that God will test the faith of all who profess to believe in God. For instance, Surah 21: *Al-Anbiya*, 35 points out:

“And every human being is bound to taste death; and We test you (all) through the bad and the good (things of life) by way of trial.”

According to the Qur’an, God designated the Ka’ba at Mecca as the Qibla in order to “test those who followed the Apostle.” The Qur’an recognizes that this “change” would cause all “except . . . those guided by God” to turn their backs on the Islamic faith even though the appointment of the Qibla at the Ka’bah is a “favor” done to Muslims by God since that was the “Qibla to which thou wast used.”

The question arises: why should the change in the direction of prayer be so “momentous” and why should it be regarded as a test of faith? It is hardly likely that Jerusalem was so important to the early Muslims that the instituting of the Qibla at the Ka’bah (which had been sacred to the Arabs since antiquity) would bring about a serious moral dilemma, nor does it seem probable that the problem of the coexistence of Muslims and Jews in Medina would have been much affected, either positively or negatively, by the change in the Muslim’s Qibla. In my judgment, what the qur’anic passage about the Qibla is pointing at is that the Muslim *ummah* has come—both historically and spiritually—to the end of one phase of development and is about to enter a new one, and that in order to enter the new phase an act of faith, of accepting the Will of God, is required, and this is where the test lies. (It is also of interest to observe here that at the time when the Ka’bah at Mecca was appointed the Qibla, it was in the possession of the pagan Quraish who were determined to wipe out Islam. It took an act of faith

to believe that the Ka'bah would be purged of its profanities and delivered into the hands of Muslims to be resanctified by them.)

From the beginning, Islam had been proud of its Abrahamic heritage, and the early Muslims had turned their faces towards Jerusalem as they prayed in order to affirm their linkage with the People of the Book, just as the early Christians had insisted upon their connection with Israel. However, with the establishment of the first Islamic society in Medina came the time and the necessity to stress not only the link of Islam with Abraham and Jerusalem but the link of Abraham to all humanity. Jerusalem, the Qibla of the People of the Book, had become associated with the exclusivism characteristic of many Jews and Christians. The former regarded themselves as the Chosen People, while the latter also made special claims to salvation through their belief in Jesus Christ. By turning the attention of the Muslim *ummah* from Jerusalem to the Qibla in Mecca, the Qur'an was, in fact, bringing about a profound change in perspective. The conflict underlying the need for this change was not the localized antagonism between Muslims and Jews in Medina, as is frequently suggested by non-Muslim writers, but a much wider opposition between the principles of exclusivism and universalism.

UNIVERSAL IDEALS

Anyone who has read the Qur'an without bias is aware that Islam is truly universal in its ideals. In this context it is interesting to note that whilst the Old Testament frequently talks of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Qur'an never does. It describes Islam as the "*Deen*" (or core belief system) of Abraham and the other prophets but does not describe God as the God of Abraham or the God of Muhammad. In *Surah Fatihah*, the opening chapter of the Qur'an, God is described as "*Rabb al-'alamin*" (or "God of all the peoples and universes"). As the following passages show, the Qur'an testifies that the message it contains is meant for all creatures:

Hallowed is He who from on high, step by step, has bestowed upon his servant the standard by which to discern the true from the false, so that to all the world it might be a warning. (*Surah 25: Al-Furqan*, 1)

And (thus it is): We have not imparted to this (Prophet the gift of) poetry, nor would (poetry) have suited this (message): it is but a reminder and a (divine) discourse, clear in itself and clearly showing the truth, to the end that it may warn anyone who is alive (of heart), and that the word (of God) may bear witness against all who deny the truth. (*Surah 36: Yasin*, 69–70)

This (divine writ) behold, is no less than a reminder to all the worlds. (*Surah 38: Sad*, 87)

This (message) is no less than a reminder to all mankind—to every one of you who wills to walk a straight way. (*Surah 81: At-Takwir*, 27–78)

The inclusive spirit of Islam also comes through the oft-repeated teaching of the Qur'an contained in verses such as the following:

Verily, those who have attained to faith (in this divine writ), as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians—all who believe in God and the last Day and do righteous deeds—shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 62)

And they claim, “None shall ever enter paradise unless he be a Jew”—or “a Christian.” Such are their wishful beliefs! Say: “Produce an evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true!”

Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto God, and is a doer of good withal, shall have his reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve. (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 111–112)

And be conscious of the Day on which you shall be brought back unto God, whereupon every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has earned, and none shall be wronged. (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 281)

And (both) the Jews and the Christians say, “We are God’s children, and His beloved ones.” Say: “Why, then, does He cause you to suffer for your sins? Nay, you are but human beings of His creating. He forgives whom He wills, and He causes to suffer whom He wills: for God’s is the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and with him is all journeys’ end.” (Surah 5: *Al-Ma’idah*, 18)

[V]erily, those who have attained to faith (in this divine writ), as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians, and the Christians—all who believe in the Last Day and do righteous deeds—no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. (Surah 5: *Al-Ma’idah*, 69)

[O]ne Day We shall raise up within every community a witness against them from among themselves. (Surah 16: *An-Nahl*, 89)

To Muslims, Abraham is an embodiment of the universalism implicit in Islam, and it is the Abrahamic spirit that enables Muslims to become “witnesses for humanity”:

And strive hard in God’s cause with all the striving that is due to Him; it is He Who has elected you (to carry His message), and has laid no hardship on you in (anything that pertains to) religion, (and made you follow) the creed of your forefather Abraham.

It is He who has named you—in bygone times as well as in this (divine writ)—“those who have surrendered themselves to God,” so that the Apostle might bear witness to the truth before you, and that you might bear witness to it before all mankind. (Surah 22: *Al-Hajj*, 78)

It is of importance to note that the qur’anic verses that refer to the Ka’bah (which Abraham built) relate the Ka’bah to all humanity and not to any specific group of people:

And lo! We made the Temple a goal to which people might repair again and again, and a sanctuary: take, then, the place whereupon Abraham once stood as place of prayer.

And thus did We command Abraham and Ishmael: “Purify My Temple for those who will walk around it, and those who will abide near it in meditation, and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves in prayer.” (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 125)

Behold, the first Temple ever set up for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah: Rich in blessing, and a (source of) guidance unto all the worlds, full of clear messages. (It is) the place whereon Abraham once stood; and whoever enters it finds inner peace. Hence, pilgrimage unto the Temple is a duty owed to God by all people who are able to undertake it. And as for those who deny the truth—verily, God does not stand in need of anything in all the worlds. (Surah 3: *Al-Imran*, 96–97)

God has laid down that the Ka'bah, the Inviolable Temple, shall be a symbol for all mankind; and (so, too,) the sacred month (of pilgrimage) and the garlanded offerings (are symbols) meant to make you aware that God is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that God has full knowledge of everything. (Surah 5: *Al-Ma'idah*, 97)

In my judgment, on the basis of the above-mentioned verses, a clear case can be made for making Mecca an open city. The government of Saudi Arabia should allow non-Muslims access to Mecca in view of the unambiguous Qur'anic statements asserting that the Ka'bah is a sanctuary for all humankind.

SACRIFICE OF ISHMAEL

The “sacrifice of Ishmael” plays an important part in Islamic traditions about Hagar and her family. Although in the Jewish and Christian traditions the son Abraham was about to sacrifice is Isaac, in the Islamic tradition it is Ishmael. From the perspective of the latter, since the son whom God commanded Abraham to sacrifice was his “only” son, the son in question had to be Ishmael who was Abraham’s first son. The Jewish and Christian traditions have ignored Ishmael in favor of Isaac because they do not accord to Hagar the same status of being Abraham’s “wife” as they do to Sarah. The Islamic tradition does not, however, distinguish between the status of Hagar and Sarah, or Ishmael and Isaac.

The Qur'anic narrative that begins with a reference to the time when Abraham prayed for a son reads as follows:

(And he prayed:) “O my Sustainer! Bestow upon me the gift of (a son who shall be) one of the righteous!”—whereupon We gave him the glad tiding of a boy-child gentle (like himself).

And (one day,) when (the child) had become old enough to share in his father’s endeavors, the latter said: “O my dear son! I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee: consider, then, what would be thy view!”

(Ishmael) answer: “O my father! Do as thou art bidden: thou wilt find me, if God so wills, among those who are patient in adversity!”

But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves to (what they thought to be) the will of God, and Abraham had laid him down on his face, We called out to him: “O Abraham. Thou hast already fulfilled (the purpose of) that dream-vision!”

Thus, verily, do We reward the doers of good: for, behold, all this was indeed a trial, clear in itself.

And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice, and left him thus to be remembered among later generations: “Peace be upon Abraham!”

Thus do we reward the doers of good—for he was truly one of our believing servants. (Surah 37: *As Saffat*, 100–111)

In the above-cited narrative the “son” is not named. However, unlike Isaac in the biblical narrative, the son in this story does know that God has commanded his father to sacrifice him. The qur’anic narrative, therefore, lacks the suspense of disclosure found in the biblical story. This narrative stresses the obedience to God of both Abraham and Ishmael, who symbolize what it means to be “Muslim.” While Abraham and Ishmael do not show the slightest hesitation in accepting God’s command, God also does not show any hesitation in offering immediate ransom for the son. Thus, while the story illustrates the faith of Abraham and Ishmael, it also shows the mercy and compassion of God toward those who remain steadfast in their resolve to live and die in accordance with the will and pleasure of God. That one cannot enter Paradise without being tested is clearly stated in the Qur’an, which also points out that, oftentimes, what we have, particularly our children and material possessions, distract us from our highest goals. The test put to Abraham and Ishmael was of the most difficult kind imaginable. That they came through shows that it is possible for “Muslims” to overcome the bondage of attachment to all that is not-God.

Abraham’s struggle against various forms of idolatry in his quest for the Ultimate are highlighted in the Qur’an. This struggle ranges from rejection of natural phenomena such as the stars, moon, and sun¹² as God, to his dissociation from his idol-worshipping father once he realized that his father was an enemy of God.¹³ The challenge of idolatry did not exist only at the time of Abraham. Idolatry exists today in subtler forms that pervade virtually every aspect of the consciousness of contemporary humanity. The struggle of Abraham, first to find God and then to remain faithful to God in the face of powerful material distractions and obstructions as well as natural affections and inclinations, is profoundly relevant to us.

The story of Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael, which is commemorated and celebrated by Muslims on the occasion of ‘Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) remains an undying source of strength and courage, hope and faith, not only for Muslims but also for Jews, Christians, and others who can understand its symbolism and what it can mean for those who consider themselves seekers and servants of God.

The story of Hagar is important not only for Muslim daughters of Hagar but for all women who are oppressed by systems of thought or structures based on ideas of gender, class, or racial inequality. Like her, women must have the faith and courage to venture out of the security of the known into the insecurity of the unknown and to carve out, with their own hands, a new world from which the injustices and inequities that separate men from women, class from class, and race from race, have been eliminated.

Notes

1. Portions of this chapter were published in *Commitment and Commemoration: Jews, Christians, Muslims in Dialogue*, ed. André LaCocque (Chicago: Ex-

ration Press, Chicago Theological Seminary, 1994), 131–50, and are used with permission.

2. Muhammad Asad, trans. and expl., *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980). All translations of the qur'anic verses are from this translation.
3. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans., *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1983), vol. 3, bk. 34: *Buyu'* (*Bargains*), chap. 102, no. 420, 230–231. Another version of the story is given in bk. 55: *The Anbiya* (*Prophets*), chap. 9, no. 578, which reads as follows:

Narrated Abu Hurairah: "Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions. Twice for the sake of Allah when he said, 'I am sick,' and he said, 'I have not done this but the big idol has done it.' (The pagans invited Abraham to join them in their celebrations outside the city, but he refused, claiming that he was sick. When he was left alone, he came to their idols and broke them into pieces. When the pagans questioned him, he claimed that he had not destroyed their idols but the chief idol had, which Abraham left undisturbed and on whose shoulder he had put an axe to lay the accusation on it). The third was that while Abraham and Sarah (his wife) were going (on a journey) they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant, 'This man (i.e., Abraham) is accompanied by a very charming lady. So he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sarah saying, 'Who is this lady? Abraham said, 'She is my sister.' Abraham went to Sarah and said, 'O Sarah! There are no believers on the surface of this earth except you and I. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, so don't contradict my statement.' The tyrant then called Sarah and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but (his hand got stiff and) he was confounded. He asked Sarah, 'Pray to Allah for me, and I shall not harm you.' So Sarah asked Allah to cure him and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but (his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and) was more confounded. He again requested Sarah, 'Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you.' Sarah asked Allah again and he became alright. He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said, 'You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil.' The tyrant then gave Hajar as a girl-servant to Sarah. Sarah came back (to Abraham) while he was praying. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked, 'What has happened?' She replied, 'Allah has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and gave me Hajar for service.'" (Abu Hurairah then addressed his listeners saying, "That (Hajar) was your mother, O Bani Ma'-is-Sama' (i.e., the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, Hajar's son).") (4:368–70)

A partial reference to the story is also found in bk. 85: *The Book of Ikrab* (*Coercion*), chap. 7, no. 82, which reads,

Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Apostle said, "(The Prophet) Abraham migrated with his wife Sarah till he reached a town where there was a king or a tyrant who sent a message to Abraham, ordering him to send Sarah to him. So when Abraham had sent Sarah, the tyrant got up, intending to do evil with her, but she got up and performed ablution and prayed and said, 'O Allah! If I have believed in You and in Your Apostle, then do not empower this oppressor over me.' So he (the king) had an epileptic fit and started moving his legs violently." (9:67–68)

4. 'Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1975), vol. 9, bk. 28: *Kitab Al-Fada'il* (*Excellent Qualities of the Prophet and his Companions*), chap. 989, no. 5848, 1262–63.
5. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans., says in the footnote, "When Abraham married Hajar and she conceived Ishmael, Sarah, Abraham's first wife, became jealous of

her and swore that she would cut three parts from her body. So Hajar tied a girdle round her waist and ran away, dragging her robe behind her so as to wipe out her tracks lest Sarah should pursue her. 'Allah knows better'" (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* 4:372).

6. *Sahih Al-Bukhari* 4:372-76. A partial reference to the story is made in the preceding hadith (no. 582) which reads, "Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: The Prophet said, "May Allah bestow His Mercy on the mother of Ishmael! Had she not hastened (to fill her water-skin with water from the Zam-zam well), Zam-zam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." Ibn 'Abbas further added, "(The Prophet) Abraham brought Ishmael and his mother (to Mecca) and she was suckling Ishmael, and she had a water-skin with her" (372).
7. The fact that Hajar is referred to as "Ishmael's mother" or as "the mother of Ishmael" should not be interpreted to mean that Hajar's identity as a person/woman is being subsumed in her identity as a mother, or that she is seen as nothing more than the mother of a son. In Arab culture, it is customary to refer not only to women but also to men as being "mother" or "father" of so-and-so. No discrimination is thus implied by this form of address.
8. This hadith reads as follows:

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: "When Abraham 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 Abraham 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 Abraham! To whom are you leaving us?' He replied, '(I am leaving you) to Allah (Care)!' She said, 'I am satisfied to be with Allah.' 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 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 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 let 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 Abraham 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.' Abraham 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, Abraham thought of visiting his dependents whom he had left (at Mecca) and he told his wife (Sarah) of his intentions. Abraham came to Ishmael's house and asked, 'Where is Ishmael?' Ishmael's wife replied, 'He has gone out hunting,' she added, 'Will you stay (for some time) and have something to eat and drink?' Abraham asked, 'What is your food and what is your drink?' She replied, 'Our food is meat and our drink is water.' He said, 'O Allah! Bless their meals and their drink.' Abu' Qasim, i.e., the Prophet, said, "Because of Abraham's invocation there are blessings (in Mecca). Once more Abraham 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.' Abraham said, 'Allah has also ordered that you should help me therein.' Ishmael said, 'Then I will do so.' So, both of them rose and Abraham started building (the Ka'bah) 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' (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 127). When the building became high and the old man (i.e., Abraham) 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 (Surah 2: *Al-Baqarah*, 127)" (379-382). (Translator's footnote reads: "This very stone is still preserved in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and is situated between the Ka'bah and Zam-zam, and one can see the footmarks of Abraham over it.")

9. In this context, the following observation taken from *Tafsir ul Baidawi*, 424, quoted by T. F. Hughes in *A Dictionary of Islam* (Lahore: Premier Book House, originally printed in 1885), is interesting: "When the tribe of Jurhum saw that there was water in that place, they said to Hajar, 'If you will share with us the water of this spring, we will share with you the milk of our herds and from that time Makkah became a place of importance."
10. As, for instance, Surah 4: *An-Nisa*, 95, 97-100, and Surah 16: *An-Nahl*, 41.
11. G. A. Parwez, *Lughat-ul-Qur'an* (Lahore: Idara Tulu'-e-Islam, 1960), vol. 2.
12. For instance, see the Qur'an, Surah 6: *Al-An'am*, 75-82; Surah 21: *Al-Anbiya'*, 51-70.
13. For instance, see the Qur'an, Surah 6: *Al-An'am*, 74; Surah 9: *At-Tawbah*, 114; Surah 19: *Maryam*, 42-47.

"Islamic Hagar and Her Family," in *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, edited by Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell, Westminster Knox Press, 2006, pp. 149-167. This book was awarded 2nd place in the 2007 Best Book on Scripture Competition by the Catholic Press Association).