

Masjid Tucson United Submitters International

P.O. Box 43476, Tucson, AZ 85733-3476
Telephone/Fax: (520)323-7636



Happiness is Submission to God Alone

Non-profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tucson, AZ
Permit #201

Keep up with history in the making. Subscribe now:
\$19/yr Overseas, \$12/yr U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Conference Notes

Praise God for the wonderful Tenth Annual Conference of the United Submitters, August 18th - 20th, 1995, held in Tucson, Arizona. *Mashallah*, this year's conference had the largest attendance ever—about 250 submitters. People came from different parts of the world to be with fellow Submitters and to understand and learn from one another how God in His infinite Grace and Mercy is guiding each one of us. The participation in and support of the conference, and other activities of the believers, constitutes striving in God's way, and also provides an opportunity to improve communication and understanding among ourselves.

This year, the focus was on young Submitters, who took the lead with brilliant and beautiful speeches. Also, among the issues discussed were the bringing up of children in an environment that provides them the best opportunities to help uphold God's commands.

The conference started on Friday with registration, which was a time of joy and celebration as we greeted old friends and welcomed new ones. After the noon banquet, we all joined together for an inspirational khutbah, followed by the Friday prayer and introductions. Then we went to Reid Park for a wonderful picnic. God blessed the picnic with the most beautiful weather. It was cloudy and cool, with an occasional shower and a rainbow. [Hearing that on the previous Friday at the same time as the picnic, Tucson had one of the worst storms in its history, this was indeed a real blessing.] The food was delicious and the arrangements superb. The picnic provided the Submitters with a wonderful opportunity to get to know new people and to catch up on developments over the last year.

Both Saturday and Sunday mornings started with the dawn prayer and Quranic recitations. After breakfast, various members of the conference spoke. As mentioned before, several young people shared with us uniformly wonderful presentations. Included in these presentations were talks, children singing songs on Submission, and group workshops on ways to present Submission to young people. Of course, there were also excellent presentations by the not so young, and lively discussions at night. We were all thankful for the information and wisdom which God allowed us to hear in these presentations and discussions.

We are all appreciative to God for the tremendous contribution of our brothers and sisters in Tucson in organizing this excellent conference.

Nargis Currim / India

Quran Translation On Disk QT Version 3.0

For IBM Compatible
Computers.
[DOS Version]

Search Capability
Topic and Help Facilities
Print Option and many more.

Why pay \$100's for a similar program?

\$7.50

QURAN THE FINAL TESTAMENT Authorized English Version

Translated from the Original
by
Rashad Khalifa, Ph.D.

Paperback, 538 Pages
Index, Appendices
English Text Only

\$9.50

(includes postage)

Special Offer!

A box of 28 paperback Qurans is now
offered for \$160 (Add \$15 more for orders
from Canada and overseas).

Quran Translation in Turkish

Limited quantities are available for \$17, Hardback
copy, Turkish text only, 530 pages. Price includes
shipping. If interested, please contact ICS/Masjid
Tucson, PO Box 43476, Tucson, AZ 85733, USA.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

Monthly Bulletin of United Submitters International Published by Masjid Tucson September 1995 Rabi II 1416 Vol.11 No. 9



SALAT AND HAJJ: THE LOST LEGACY OF ABRAHAM IN THE WEST

(Part 2)

[Editor's note: This is the second of a two-part article; the first—on the aspect of Salat—appeared in last month's Perspective. In this second part we will see, God willing, what the Bible says on the subject of hajj pilgrimage. With insight from the Quran, a study of the Bible sheds a new light on some of the practices of hajj, which indeed is an ancient ritual started by Abraham]

error in translations of this kind (discussed for example in Kenyon, 1958, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*; Lamsa, 1968, *The Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text*; Spray, 1992, *Jesus: Myths and Message*, and others).

Hajj And Hag: A Parallel

What does the Bible have to say about the hajj? First of all, there are many words or phrases in the Bible for which even Biblical scholars are unsure of the meaning. For example, the footnotes of *The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)*, published by the International Bible Society and probably the most widely used version of the Bible, are replete with statements such as "the meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain."

Then there is the problem of translation itself, from Hebrew or Aramaic to Greek to Latin and finally into modern languages such as English. It has been widely acknowledged that these translation and re-translation processes are fraught with loss or change in the meanings of words and idioms. This is especially true if the translators are not familiar with the Semitic customs and manners of the time in which the scriptures were recorded originally. There are many other sources of

What has this to do with the subject of hajj? We have to start with the word itself, and its root *h-j*. The investigation of the original meaning of the root *h-j* goes no further than hypotheses. The Arabic lexicographers give the meaning "to betake oneself to or towards an object of reverence;" this would agree with "pilgrimage" although this meaning is clearly denominative. According to Gesenius' *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, the Hebrew equivalent is "hag" (חג). The verb means "to make a pilgrimage" or "to keep a pilgrim-feast" (see for example Moses in Exodus 5:1, 10:9). In the noun form it has the same meaning; additionally, the hag also refers to the Feast of Booths, to which we will come back later. It is also possible that the root "hoog" (הוּג = to go around, to go in a circle) in North as well as South Semitic languages is connected with it. (One may recall that circumambulation, or *tawaf*—going around the Ka'ba, is an important part of the hajj). It is a common practice among the Jews to perform cir-

cling (hoog) in the temple's sanctuary during the hag. What is interesting is that the verb "hag" can also refer to "circling in the sacred dance." Keeping in mind that Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic—the scriptural languages of Abraham's descendants—have a common Semitic root, we can easily see that the Arabic characters *ha* and *jim* are the equivalent of the Hebrew *heth* and *gimel*. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Arabic speaking Egyptians also make the same substitution. For example, they use 'gabal' instead of the standard Arabic 'jabal' for mountain; thus, they also say 'hag' instead of 'hajj.'

Let us compare the following passages, which contain the word 'pilgrimage,' from the Quran and the Bible:

He said (to Moses), "I wish to offer one of my two daughters for you to marry, in return for your working for me for eight pilgrimages; if you make them ten, it will be voluntary on your part..." (Quran 28:27)

Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?" And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." (Genesis 47:8-9)

continued on the next page

Salat and Hajj *continued*

In both cases, the word 'pilgrimage' alludes to the same meaning, i.e. year, indicating a well known fact that pilgrimage is an annual event. Other translations of the Bible use the word 'sojourning' and 'wayfaring' in place of 'pilgrimage' (*The Holy Scriptures*, Jewish Publication Society, 1916 and *The New American Bible*, Catholic Book Publishing, 1977 respectively). They may have kept the same understanding (i.e. 'year') but in so doing, they have inadvertently obscured the fact that pilgrimage already was a well known annual event during the time of Jacob and the Pharaoh.

An Old Semitic Custom

According to *E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-1916* (Vol.III, pp.199-200), pilgrimage to a sanctuary is an old Semitic custom, which is prescribed even in the older parts of the Pentateuch as an indispensable duty. "Three times a year shall you celebrate for Me a hag" is written in Exodus 23:14. The North Semitic autumnal festival (the Feast of Booths) in the Old Testament is often briefly called the hag (e.g. Judges 21:19, 1 Kings 8:2,65), as has been mentioned earlier.

Another important part of the Muslim's hajj is the *wukuf*, or the standing in 'Arafat. This has been compared with the stay of the Israelites on the foot of Mount Sinai. To prepare for this, the children of Israel had to purify their garments and refrain from sexual intercourse. Thus they waited upon God (Exodus 19:10-11,14-15). In the same way (Quran 2:196-198), Muslims wear holy clothing, refrain from sexual intercourse and stand before God at the foot of a sacred mountain. (وقف = كنف = standing).

While performing the circumambulation of the Ka'ba (*tawaf*), the pilgrims glorify and praise the Name of God using an ancient formula that predates the Quran (*labbayka Allaahumma labbayk* = I have responded to You, my Lord, I have responded to You). The Arabic word "labbayk" (which literally means "here I am") was the same word used by Abraham and Moses in the Bible, when they responded to God's call (Genesis 22:1,11, Exodus 3:4). In fact, a whole prayer was written around the very phrase "here I

am," solely to be said on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which follows the hag.

In the Bible (Genesis 18:16-33), we read that Abraham had a conversation with God where he tried to understand God's forgiveness and mercy. The place where Abraham stood (Genesis 19:27) is called *makom Abraham* in Hebrew. More specifically, the rabbinical understanding of *makom Abraham* is that this is the same place in which Abraham was about to sacrifice his own son until God intervened (see Genesis 22:4, 9, 14). It was believed that on this place Solomon built the holiest of the Jewish shrines, the Temple of the Mount. (It was eventually destroyed by the king of Babylon; on this very same spot in what was already known as Jerusalem the Ummayyad finally built Masjid Al-Aqsa, which is still standing today). The concept of *makom Abraham* is also found in the Quran. The place inside the Ka'ba in Mecca where Abraham stood and prayed for guidance is called *maqam Ibrahim* or 'the station of Abraham' in the Quran 3:96, as the following verses make clear:

As Abraham raised the foundations of the shrine, together with Ismail (they prayed): "Our Lord, accept this from us. You are the Hearer, the Omniscient. Our Lord, make us submitters to You, and from our descendants let there be a community of submitters to You. Teach us the rites of our religion, and redeem us. You are the Redeemer, Most Merciful." (2:127-8)

The most important shrine established for the people is the one in Becca; a blessed beacon for all the people. In it are clear signs: the station of Abraham. Anyone who enters it shall be granted safe passage. The people owe it to God that they shall observe pilgrimage (hajj) to this shrine, when they can afford it... (3:96-7).

Pilgrimage to Baca in the Bible

For fourteen centuries, no one dared to 'correct' the peculiar Quranic spelling of Becca in verse 3:96, the city that had been known as Mecca for as long as its people during prophet Muhammad's time could remember. (The advent of the Quran's numerical structure provides an import-

ant explanation, as the frequency of the Arabic letter M—*Meem*—is connected to it). Some have argued that Becca was the ancient name for Mecca (see for example historian Ibn Ishaq's view, and editor Ibn Hisham's note, in A. Guillaume's translation *The Life of Muhammad*, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 47, 708). Now we learn that this peculiar Quranic spelling may also shed some light on an obscure Biblical passage. That Becca is indeed the ancient name for Mecca, the city of pilgrimage in which Abraham founded its shrine, *bait al-Lah*, the house of God—the Ka'ba. That this pilgrimage was known to the children of Israel of ancient times.

How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they are ever praising You. Blessed are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with blessings.... (Psalm 84:1-6)

This psalm is also known as the psalm of the pilgrimage. It seems to reflect the children of Israel's ancient longing for the House of God that their patriarch Abraham had built in Baca (Becca), and their ancient practice of making a pilgrimage there. In a sense, it confirms what historian Ibn Ishaq wrote in the 8th century AD about the ancient Jews who used to make a pilgrimage to their patriarch Abraham's temple in Mecca, centuries before Ibn Ishaq's time. They stopped the practice when the inhabitants of the city turned into "unclean polytheists." Their setting up of idols around the Ka'ba, and the blood which they shed there, presented an insurmountable obstacle for them (Guillaume, *op.cit.*, p.9).

The Holy Scriptures of the Jewish Publication Society retained the name Baca, but used "the highways" instead of "pilgrimage" (although still in the context of

continued on the next page

Salat and Hajj *continued*

the road to pilgrimage). The crucial passage is now read: *'Happy is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose hearts are the highways. Passing through the valley of Baca...'* The New American Bible's 1977 edition of the Catholic church, on the other hand, kept the word "pilgrimage" but translated the proper name "Baca" using its secondary meaning "the mastic tree." The passage read: *'Happy the men whose strength you are! Their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage. When they pass through the valley of the mastic trees...'* and its true meaning is irreparably lost.

Indeed, in Arabic and Hebrew, the word *becca/baca* also means 'the mastic or the balsam tree.' Another meaning of the word is 'the overflowing tears.' These two meanings fit the description of Mecca as well. Mecca is a place where these evergreen trees are found in abundance (the Meccan balsam is a well known name in pharmacopeia). Furthermore, the commemoration of God's Name, and God alone during hajj, truly brings tears to many a pilgrim's eyes.

Despite the many versions of the Bible's translation, a careful study by a sincere seeker will bring the true meaning of passages, verses or even a single word. God has also sent down His Final Testament—the Quran, to shed light on Biblical passages such as those quoted above.

We have revealed this scripture to you, to point out for them what they dispute, and to provide guidance and mercy for people who believe.... What we revealed to you in this scripture is the truth, consummating all previous scriptures. God is fully Cognizant of His servants, Seer. (Quran 16:64, 35:31)

Gatut S. Adisoma, Ph.D.

(The author is grateful to Rabbi Thomas Louchheim of Tucson, who is very helpful in transliterating Biblical passages from the Hebrew text and for his insights into Jewish religious practices. The author also owed a great deal to Irfan Anshory and Nia Kurnia for their very informative letter to the TEMPO magazine, Jakarta in June 1993, which became an impetus for this article. Unless otherwise noted, the NIV Bible translations are used throughout)

Readers' Responses

I hope that this letter finds you in good mood and improved health. I am exploring deviations of "the world of Islam" through my major source—the Internet. I am asking myself a question as to why the so called "Muslim world" is so backward and thus useless as an ally. What I found on *soc.culture.islam* and *alt.religion.islam* is DARK AGE horror! I could not imagine people whose brains are so badly manipulated and destroyed like too many (more than 50%) of people who post there. Just imagine the "common folk, the masses" if the "intelligentsia" (living in the West, to boot), is at such a dark age? Terrible!

As far as the heresy of "Hadith and Sunna" is concerned, it is plainly obvious that "reputable scholars" are defending their bastions of idiocy with their lives. They certainly know from which side there bread is buttered. It is the clergy that is destroying Islam. I have seen it in Bosnia; they are ugly, and it seems that is universal. It is interesting that the Bosnian Church, and Islam in its true form (as I understand them), reject clericalism and the human "middle men" interventionism and such. You should hit them on those grounds.

Keep in touch. Greetings, S. Rustempasic

Ahamdulillah, we from Down Under are blessed by GOD with good health. Hope you all are too. Sorry, I was unable to attend the 10th Annual Conference of the United Submitters International. *Inshallah*, I might be able to make it next year. It must be a wonderful experience to be able to meet and share with the rest of the fellow submitters from all corners of the earth. We have just started here—God willing, who knows with Allah's help, we could have the Conference here Down Under, in Australia for a change.

We have our moments here—the Satans are trying hard to revert us back to the old *Jahilliah's* time and traditional ways—*Hadith* and *Sunnah* ways. We are hanging on to the rope of God, steadfast and persevere. We are allies with GOD and GOD's promise of happiness: Now and forever. "Absolutely, GOD's allies have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve." (10:62)

...Hope to hear from you soon.... Thank you and may we all continue and persevere to worship ALLAH ALONE and follow our Lord's Scripture, QURAN ALONE. "Our Lord, forgive us our transgressions, remit our sins, and let us be among the righteous when we die." (3:193)

Your brethren in Faith, Z. N. Stumer

Wiggly & Thistle

Written by Lisa Spray
Illustrated by Parisa Parnian

An illustrated fantasy of children from different faiths discovering that they worship the One God.
Booklet, 57 Pages

\$3.75

Price includes the postage.

ICS/Masjid Tucson
PO Box 43476
Tucson, AZ 85733

Who Are We?

During the past fourteen centuries, traditions, customs, and myths have crept into the religion of Islam (Submission). Gradually, they have become dogma or ritual, to such an extent that anyone who questions them in the light of the Quran finds himself or herself regarded as a dangerous innovator and heretic.

Islam (Submission) today is like a precious jewel that is buried under piles upon piles of man-made innovations. Our aim is to purge these innovations by upholding the Quran and nothing but the Quran alone, and present the jewel of true Submission to the world.